

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD


Stephen Charnock

In the absence of any twentieth-century edition of the complete Works of Stephen Charnock, this one-time assistant to John Owen has tended to be known only through his writing of 'The Attributes of God'. But no less valuable, and certainly more readable, are Charnock's sermons. Fifteen are here reprinted, commencing with '*A Discourse of the Knowledge of God*'. Other major themes which follow include *Unbelief*, *The Lord's Supper*, *Self-Examination* and *The Death of Christ*.

The volume (originally vol 4 of Nichol's definitive edition of Charnock's Works) is one of the finest examples of Puritan preaching — biblical, doctrinal and experimental. If one's choice of all Nichol's great reprints had to be reduced to a single volume, there would be a case for choosing this one.

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STEPHEN CHARNOCK



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The Knowledge of God

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THE COMPLETE WORKS

OF

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With Introduction

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VOL. IV.

CONTAINING :

DISCOURSES ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD; UNBELIEF;
THE LORD'S SUPPER, &c.

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DISCOURSES.

A DISCOURSE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.—JOHN XVII. 3.

THIS chapter contains Christ's last prayer with his disciples, after his farewell sermon, which began after Judas his departure, John xiii. 31, and ends at the end of the 16th chapter. The design of his sermon and that of his prayer was one and the same; his discourse to them was, that they might have peace in him, John xvi. 33; that they might acquiesce in him for peace with God;* that peace of conscience was only to be possessed by the knowledge and love of Christ. His prayer for them in their hearing was, that they might have a firm and full joy, ver. 13; that they might have an antidote against all their fears and troubles they should meet with in the world, and a strong foundation for their own supplications to God. Zanchy calls it the foundation of the church from the beginning of the world to the end of it. It always had, and always will have, its efficacy for every believer; it is a copy left upon the earth of what he doth intercede for as an advocate in heaven. By an inspection into it, we may know what Christ is doing above; for it was that his people might have a full joy, a strong cordial in all afflictions, desertions, temptations.

Some think it to be the same with that prayer in the garden; but that opinion hath no firm foundation.†

(1.) The matter of the prayer is different. In this, our Saviour prays for his own glorification, for assistance in his approaching passion, and an unloosing afterwards the bands of death by an happy resurrection; in that, he prays for a removal of the cup which was brewed for him.

(2.) The gesture is different. In this, he lifts up his eyes to heaven, in token of a confidence in his Father for the answer of his prayer, with such confidence as he hath in heaven in his intercession; in the garden, he fell prostrate upon the earth: Mat. xxvi. 39, 'He fell on his face, and prayed.' His eyes were towards the earth.

(3.) His company were not the same. In this, his disciples were with him; in that, he withdrew from his disciples, taking only three with him, Mat. xxvi. 37, and presently went aside from them also by himself, ver. 39. This prayer they all heard, the other they did not, for sleep had possessed them.

* Ferus.

† Gerhard, Harm. cap. clxxx.

(4.) In this, he prays as Mediator, and pleads the terms of the mediatory covenant, which had been agreed upon before his coming into the world; in that, he prays more like a man from the strugglings of the flesh, as though there had been a contest between human nature and his mediatory office. In the one, he declares his deity; in the other, evidenceth his humanity, in the infirmities of the flesh. In this, his soul was free from disturbance; in that, 'his soul was sorrowful and very heavy, even unto death,' Mat. xxvi. 37, 38. He prayed then as one standing charged with all our sins, which made him bow his head to the ground; he prayeth here as one that hath satisfied for our sins, triumphed over his enemies, and performed his Father's will: John xvii. 4, 'I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.' In fine, this prayer in regard of the matter he doth still pursue in heaven, the other petition he never did afterwards, nor ever shall reassume into his lips.

If any part of Scripture be to be magnified above another, this seems to claim the pre-eminence, it being the breathing out of Christ's heart before his departure, for the comfort of his disciples, and the succeeding church to the end of the world; a standing monument of his whole mediatory design, and his unalterable love.

Ver. 1, 'These words spake Jesus, and lift up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son may also glorify thee.' Christ first acted with man in the name of God by teaching,* he now acts with God in the name of man by praying. It is a miraculous prayer in the person of Christ, who is essentially one with the Father, to whom he prays;† personally one with the Son of man, who prays here to the Father.

Father. Not *our Father*, as he had taught us to pray, but *Father*, to shew that the paternity of the Father to him was in another manner than that to his people. He was the natural Son of God, believers adopted ones.

Thy Son. In a way of eminency and peculiarity above others; thy Son by eternal generation, thy Son in his humanity by the grace of personal union.

The hour is come. The hour of my passion, the hour of thy satisfaction; the hour of thy expectation, the hour of my victory and thy glory. I am coming to the last upshot of my humiliation, I have managed an obedience to thee hitherto with all care and diligence; I am now come to perfect it by my death, I will not decline the last act of it; decline not thou, O Father, the glorifying of me, while I stand as the butt of all thy wrath for the sins of men.

Glorify thy Son. Glorify him in his death, by accepting it as the death of thy Son for the sins of the world; glorify him in his death, by manifesting at that time that I am thy Son. God did so by miraculous testimonies of his innocency in the time of his passion, by rending of the temple's veil, obscurity of the sun, quaking of the earth, and the cleaving of the rocks, which made the centurion that guarded him pronounce him to be 'truly the Son of God,' Mat. xxvii. 54.

Glorify him in a resurrection; glorify thy Son in his deity, by a manifestation of it; glorify thy Son in his humanity, by conferring new endowments of honour and immortality upon it. He prays here for a manifestation of the glory of his deity, which had been obscured, for an addition of glory to his humanity, which had not been yet enjoyed, by a resurrection and exaltation of it to the right hand of the Father. He prays for a manifestation of his deity: 'Glorify thy Son.' He was the Son of God by eternal genera-

* Illyric. in loc.

† Gerhard, Harmon. cap. clxxx.

tion; it is the glory of his deity therefore which is here desired by him. Not the essential glory of the Deity, for that could not be interrupted; not any addition to it, for, being infinite, he was not capable of it, but a manifestation of it; not simply in itself, but in his humanity, which had been veiled by the flesh ever since he emptied himself into it. He prays to be glorified in that state wherein he prays, which was a state of union with the human nature. His essential glory could suffer no detriment, his manifestative did. As the sins of men are said to dishonour God, not that they detract from the glory of his essence, which cannot suffer any diminution by the sins of men, but as they deny and obscure the manifestation of his glory; the sun suffers no loss of light in its body by the veil of a thick cloud, but the brightness of his beams is masked. As the Father was to be glorified by Christ, so was Christ to be glorified by the Father. Now, the Father could not be glorified by the Son in a way of addition, but manifestation, causing the glory of God to break out upon the world, which had so long been obscured by an universal idolatry. He glorified the Father by a manifestation of his name, ver. 4; and in like manner is glorified by the Father in the manifestation of his deity.

That Christ prays here for the glory of his deity as well as of his humanity is evident,* because he prays as mediator and priest, desiring a mediatory glory; but he was mediator and priest according to his divine as well as human nature, and therefore desires that he might be known to the world, not only to be a just and innocent man, but the eternal Son of God, the Redeemer of the world, the expiator of sins, and in that work infinitely delightful to the Father.

Glorify thy Son. Glorify him as thy Son, that as thy Son he may glorify thee. The Son of God was in the world as a great light in a dark lantern, clouded and covered with clay, that though the candle burned, it did not appear, but through some crannies. He desires that this thick mist might be dispersed, that the glory of his divinity might shine forth in his humanity, as a candle through polished glass. The glory of Christ was to be manifested to be the Son of God: John i. 14, 'We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father;' a glory in his resurrection, his ascension, in the mission of the Spirit, which declared him to be no other than the only Son of God; and so verse 22 of this chapter is to be understood, 'The glory which thou gavest me I have given them.' As it is my glory to be the Son of God, so I have given them this glory, to be the sons of God by adoption, 'that they may be one, as we are one;' in the same relation of sonship, though in a different manner.

His petition for this glory he urgeth by two arguments:

(1.) One in ver. 1, 'That thy Son also may glorify thee.' The glory of the Father was concerned in it, whose justice, wisdom, love (and all the attributes so signally manifested in redemption), had lain under as great a disguise without the glory of Christ, as the deity of the Son did under the veil of his flesh.

(2.) Another,† taken from the happiness and salvation of the elect, ver. 2, 'As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.' Unless the humanity had been glorified by a resurrection, there would have been no assurance that the debt had been satisfied, and no sure ground of faith; unless he had been exalted to the right hand of God as an advocate, there had been no security for our debts. His resurrection was necessary to make men believers for what was passed, his exaltation was necessary to make them comfortable believers for

* Zanch. de tribus Elohim, part. i. l. 4. c. 10.

† Zanch. ut supra.

the time to come; and unless his divine nature had been manifested in the mission of the Spirit, and the collation of miraculous gifts, there had been no foundation for the propagation of the doctrine of redemption, and so that glorious work had lain wrapped up from human view. The other was necessary as a ground of faith, and this was necessary to the declaration of the doctrine of faith, and an incentive to the embracing of it. Since he was shortly to die, and be executed under the notion of a criminal, a blasphemer, and a wicked man, if he were not raised again, not one would believe in him as mediator, and so the glory of the Father, and the salvation of the elect, had sunk with the glory of the Son.

Observe,

1. The inexpressible care of Christ for the comfort of his people before he went out of the world. He had preached to them, he would pray for them in their hearing, that their joy might be full. He could not manifest his care in an higher manner than by using his power with his Father for their good; here he gives an assurance of the efficacy of his mediation, the certain terms wherein he stood with the Father. They might before have questioned the truth of those things which he had said unto them; but there was no room for any doubt, when they find him, a little before his death, asserting the same things to his Father, begging the accomplishment of them. Howsoever some of them might suspect the declarations of a man, they would not suspect his appeals to God.

2. The consideration of God's being a Father is the highest ground of confidence in prayer, and a strong argument to excite the kindness of God towards us. 'Father, glorify thy Son.' It is a glory Christ hath purchased for, and given to, every believer, to call God *Father*: John xx. 17, 'My Father and your Father;' before his passion it was, 'I go to *the* Father,' now '*your* Father' as well as mine. Not *our* Father, but *my* Father and *your* Father, mine by nature, yours by grace; yet as really yours by grace, as mine by nature. Our addresses are to be to God as a Father, since the relation is real, really purchased, really confirmed. Members should imitate the head, use their privileges, since the Redeemer hath taken our infirmities that we might partake of his dignity. With what confidence may a child ask, with what bowels will a father give. Christ had the sense of his Sonship when he prayed, and we should have the sense of our adoption.

3. The passion of Christ was the determination of God. 'The hour is come,' the time pitched to a moment, the hour and the work of the hour agreed on and determined, between the Father and the Son, in an eternal council; all the consultations of the Jews against him were successful till this hour. Times and events are in the hands of God.

4. Christ was a voluntary Redeemer. The hour is come. I am ready to perform what thou hast enjoined and I have promised. He sought no shelter from suffering; he expressed here no sorrow for it, no grief at it; he looks beyond the hour of suffering to the hour of glory. We should be voluntary subjects, and look through the cloud of suffering to the glory of the crown.

5. The full assurance of obtaining what we want must not chill our supplications for it. Who can have greater assurance of supply than our Redeemer had of assistance in his task, and exaltation after it? Insured by the promises to him, backed by the oath of God, that he should be a priest for ever, of which he had at this time a sense and impression upon his heart, John xiii. 1, 3, he knew that he should 'depart out of this world unto the Father;' and 'knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, that he was come from God, and went to God,' yet he prays for that glory. Promises are not damps, but incentives and guides, to prayer; they are to

inflame us, not to cool us. How can we pray in faith without a promise, which is the ground of faith, since prayer is nothing but a putting promises in suit! Precepts command us to pray, and promises direct us what to pray for, with hopes of success. The promises of a seed to Christ stand firm, yet he is now in heaven an advocâte interceding for it. As Christ, though assured, hath nothing without asking, so neither can his members. Promises encourage to put in our claim to them, and not our waiving it. When Daniel knew that the term of the church's captivity was near expired, according to the promise of God, he buckles more to prayer, Dan. ix. 2, 3.

6. The glory of God must be principally in our minds, and nearest our hearts in all our supplications. Christ prays first for his own glory, but as a means for the glory of his Father, before he prays particularly for the good of the church: 'Glorify thy Son, that thy Son may also glorify thee;' and only for such a glory for himself, whence the glory of the Father might spring with a greater brightness upon the Son; for, by the raising Christ, and manifesting the glory of his deity, the Father would be glorified in full declarations of himself, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the author of the great redemption, as a God that so loved the world as to send his Son into it for the redemption of it. 'Hallowed be thy name,' is the first petition in the Lord's prayer. The glory of God must weigh more in our thoughts than our private interest: his glory is to be our end in our common actions, 1 Cor. x. 31, much more in acts of religious worship. If another end be higher in our hearts, in our prayers, though we pray to God, we really worship an idol, viz. self; though God be the object, yet he is not the end. We must seek to God for all blessings, with the same end for which God gives them; he gives us the highest for his glory: Eph. i. 6, 'He hath accepted us in his beloved, to the praise of the glory of his grace.' We must beg for self subordinately, but for God's glory ultimately. Our Saviour begged glory for himself, that he might return glory to his Father. To beg any thing for ourselves principally, is the prayer of some lust, ambition, or covetousness; to beg any thing for God's glory is a prayer of grace, like that of our Saviour's.

7. The glory of the Father and the Son are linked together. The Father cannot be glorified without the Son, nor the Son without the Father. They are in conjunction in all the actions of redemption, and therefore in the glory redounding from it. The Father glorified the Son when he declared him to be Saviour of the world; and by this declaration was the Father discovered to be full of bowels to the world. The sun in the heavens is not glorified but in his beams, and the beam is not glorified but by the communication of light from the sun; what glory the sun hath is discovered in the beam, what glory the beam hath redounds to the sun. The Father was glorified in all his acts which concerned the glory of Christ; his wisdom, in finding out so full and efficacious a remedy; his justice, in his death; his power, in the sustentation of him in his sufferings, and his resurrection from the grave; his veracity, in every circumstance which had been foretold; his love and kindness, in the mission of the Spirit, to spread his wings over the world, who was before confined to the Jews. As the glory of both is linked in itself, it must be linked in our services; we must honour both, one as the object of worship, the other as the medium; the Father as the rector, Christ as the ambassador. As the Father is not glorified by Christ, but by first glorifying Christ, so neither is the Father glorified by us without our glorifying Christ first by believing. When we glorify Christ as the Son of God, we glorify God as the Father of Christ; we cannot glorify the paternity without acknowledging a filiation, nor acknowledge a filiation without honouring the paternity.

8. Christ's prayer being argumentative, teacheth us the manner of our praying, which should consist of arguments for God's glory and our happiness: not that arguments move God to do that which he is not willing of himself to do for us (as Christ's pressing arguments to his Father was not to inform God of the necessity of what he prayed for), as though the infinitely wise God needed information, or the infinitely loving God needed persuasion, but it is for strengthening our faith in him. All the prayers in the Scripture you will find to be reasoning with God, not a multitude of words heaped together; and the design of the promises is to furnish us with a strength of reason in this case: Dan. ix. 16, 'Now, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thy anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem.' He pleads God's righteousness in his promise of the set time of deliverance; after he had settled his heart in a full belief of the promise of deliverance, he shews God's own word to him. The arguments you will find drawn from the covenant in general, or some promise in particular, or some attribute of God, or the glory of God. All this prayer of Christ is full of arguments drawn from several heads; the first petition is backed by one: ver. 2, 'As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him,' which is another reason he urgeth for his sustentation in his passion, and his resurrection and exaltation; and the sense runs thus:—It is necessary I should be glorified, since thou hast given me a power to give eternal life to as many as thou hast given me, which was not given me as an empty title and useless power; give me therefore such a glory which may make that power I am endowed with significant for those ends for which it is conferred; the giving eternal life was the great end of my coming into the world, which life cannot be had without the knowledge of thee the true God, and of Jesus Christ as mediator. The glory of my humanity and the manifestation of my deity are necessary to the exercise of this power, and the attainment of the end thereof, that those which thou hast given me may know who I am, that I am a priest and mediator of thy appointment, thy Son, in whose hands their happiness is secure, that so they may trust me and believe in me; and herein, O Father, thou wilt be glorified, for by this they will understand how wise, holy, true, good, merciful, loving thou art to the sons of men.

Observe,

1. The glory of Christ, and the glory of the Father in and by Christ, is the security of the glory of the church and every believer. The glory of the Father is the first link in the chain, upon which all the other benefits Christ desires for the church do depend. The first reason he presseth for his own glory is the glory of the Father, the next is the salvation of the elect. As they are joined in Christ's prayer, they are also knit together in themselves. It is the glory of God that the whole lower creation, made to set forth his praise, should not be the triumph of the devil, that he should not boast that he had frustrated God's design. Is it not the glory of God that his eternal counsel should have its full accomplishment, that the beauty of his believing creatures should be restored, the honour of God established, and the enemies of God put to confusion? This hath the same bottom as the glory of the Father hath, viz., the glory of Christ. Since this is established, the other will be completed, and the eternal glory of believers stand as firm as the glory of the Father. The perseverance of a believer is secured, for if it be the honour of God to snatch souls out of the devil's hand, it is for his honour to keep them, that they may not be regained by the enemy from whom they have been delivered.

2. The glory of Christ was necessary for the salvation of believers. It is

upon this account Christ pleads for it. Had he not been raised, sin had not been expiated; had he not ascended, heaven had not been opened; had he not been set at the right hand of God, the atonement of sin had not been secured; had not the Spirit been sent into the world for the glory of Christ, the knowledge of this expiation had not been propagated.

3. The infinite love of Christ shines forth in this. A power was given him. He desires no glory of his Father but what was necessary for the good of his people, and what he would lay out wholly for their interest. Christ esteems not any glory but as it is of use to his elect; and his chiefest glory consists, not in possessing a power, but in exercising it for their benefit. Take notice of the love of the Father too; this power was given by him to this end, that he should give eternal life to those that were his Father's donatives. Upon this the salvation of the elect stands firm. The end of God's giving authority to Christ, and the end of Christ desiring a glory for the exercise of that authority, is one and the same; Christ will not be unfaithful to his Father, to neglect the end of the power he is entrusted with, nor will he cross the end of his own petition. What stronger argument can a believing soul urge in prayer, and embrace as a ground of faith? The Father's gift and the Son's request centering in one end, which will be denied by neither, affords a strong consolation. As the end of the righteousness Adam had was to convey it to his posterity, so the end of the power Christ hath is to convey righteousness and secure happiness to his spiritual seed, who hath the immutable strength of the Deity surmounting the weakness and mutability of Adam's humanity, and will be as faithful to his trust as Adam was false to his.

4. How large and extensive is the kingdom and authority of Christ! It is not limited to narrow confines. It extends over every creature, over all flesh, not one exempted; he hath a throne above the greatest monarchs; he is King of kings and Lord of lords. They cannot escape his iron rod who refuse to subject themselves to his gracious sceptre. All that are fallen under the power of the devil by sin are now under the dominion of Christ in grace or justice. All nations are subjected to him, as his inheritance and possession. Ps. ii. 8.

5. The kingdom of Christ is by a divine authority. Thou hast given him power: Ps. ii. 8, 'Ask of me and I will give thee.' It is not usurped, but by an eternal grant, and perpetual. Whatsoever he doth in his kingdom, in order to the eternal life of believers, is ratified by God the Father, the donor of this power to him.

6. The whole scene of the government of the world is for the promoting the eternal life of the elect. All the world is in the hands of Christ. He hath power over all flesh for this end, to give eternal life to those that God hath given to him. Every act of his government tends to this end. What is the end of his power is the true end of the exercise of that power, in every act of it in the world. It must needs be so by consequence; and how sweet will it be at last to see the whole combination; how unanimously every providence did conspire to this end, which our ignorant souls cannot now discern!

7. We see what is the right way to gain eternal life. The power of bestowing it is invested in Christ; we must have recourse to him not only as the purchaser, but as the donor, by authority from the Father. We must believe in him as the purchaser upon the cross, call upon him as the distributor upon his throne. He had power given to merit it, as he was one sent; he had power given him to confer it, as he was one exalted.

8. One mercy sometimes is a strong plea for the obtaining of another.

The gift of a power over all flesh is an argument used by Christ for a further glory. The power would be a fruitless gift; God would lose the honour of it, the praise of it, the improvement of it, if Christ were not put into a full capacity for the exercise of it. How often may we find logic enough in one mercy to argue for more, with that God who is not willing the honour of his mercy should be lost, when the desires of his creatures are to glorify him. To what purpose should God justify and sanctify, if he did not intend to glorify? He would else lose the glory of his former mercy, and his people would lose the comfort of it. If God lays the foundation, it is a strong plea for his raising the building to its full height.

We come now to the text, 'This is eternal life,' &c.

This is a transition from his prayer, declaring what eternal life was. Some understand it of the intuitive knowledge of God in heaven; but it rather seems to be meant of the knowledge of God here in this state of pilgrimage.

1. The reason of the petition evinceth it.* Since thou, O Father, hast designed me to give eternal life, I can never accomplish this unless thou dost glorify me, because eternal life can only be conferred on those who acknowledge thee, and the mediator thou hast sent. If I be not raised, none can be rationally induced to believe me to be mediator; and if I do not ascend to heaven, the Spirit cannot come into the world, and consequently all means of manifesting thee in the mediator will be wanting, and the eternal life I was designed to give be kept from those thou hast designed for it.

2. He declares that those apostles who were then with him had known that he came out from God, and had believed that God had sent him, ver. 8, and so had the root of eternal life in them, who yet were without an intuitive knowledge of God, of a blessed vision, which belongs only to a state of glory. It must therefore be meant of a knowledge of God by faith in this world.

But it is the effect for the cause; the knowledge of God is not formally eternal life, but the cause of it, and the antecedent means to it. It is not eternal life in the formality and nature of it, but in the infallibility of causation; because if men had the true knowledge of Christ impressed upon them, it could not be but they must believe in him, and consequently have both a right to eternal life and the foretaste of it. It is frequent in the Scripture to put the effect for the cause, as John iii. 19, 'This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world,' *i. e.* this is the cause of condemnation.

This knowledge of God is not only a knowledge of God and Christ in the theory, but such a knowledge which is saving, joined with ardent love to him, cordial trust in him, as 1 Cor. xiii. 12, 'Then I shall know even as also I am known,' *i. e.* I shall love and rejoice, as I am beloved and delighted in by God. It is not only a knowledge of God in his will, but a knowledge of God in his nature; both must go together; we must know him in his nature, we must be obedient to his will. The devil hath a greater knowledge of God's being than any man upon earth, but since he is a rebel to his will, he is not happy by his knowledge. It must be such a knowledge as leads to eternal life, and hath a necessary and infallible connection with it, as the effect with the cause, which is not between a speculative knowledge and salvation. It must be therefore such a knowledge which descends from the head to the heart, which is light in the mind and heat in the affections; such a knowledge of God as includes faith in him.

Two things constitute this knowledge:

1. We must know God, the true God, as the gospel discovers him, in

* Gerhard. Harm. cap. 180.

opposition to all false gods ; that he is spiritual, just, powerful, merciful, faithful.

2. We must know God as the Father of Christ ; we must know him in that relation to Christ, without which knowledge we can have no right conceptions of the economy of redemption, because all proceeds from the Father through the Son.

That which is the greatest stumbling-block in the text is that clause, 'thee the only true God,' whereby some would exclude the deity of Christ. Christ prays to the Father, and acknowledgeth him the only true God ; if the Father therefore, say some, be the only true God, then Christ is not God, and they tell us that Christ is *Deus factus, Deus constitutus*. But to say a *made God*, is as great nonsense as to say an *uncreated creature*. Both carry a contradiction in the terms. The Scripture doth frequently and plainly assert the deity of Christ : no creature can be equal with God. But Christ was 'in the form of God,' and 'thought it no robbery to be equal with God,' Philip. ii. 6. He was equal to God in his deity, though inferior to God in his humanity ; the form of God stooped to the form of a servant, but the form of a servant despoiled him of nothing essential to the form of God ; he ceased not to be what he was before, when he became in the womb of the virgin what he was not before. 'All things that the Father hath are mine,' saith Christ, John xvi. 15 ; what is more the Father's than his essence and deity ? The essence, therefore, and deity of the Father is the essence and deity of the Son. Austin argues well upon John i. 3, 'All things were made by him,' by the Word ; therefore, himself was not made, for nothing can make itself ; and, it is added, 'without him nothing was made.' Therefore, the *λόγος* is not *ex rebus factis*. He is therefore God, for there is no medium ; and he is called 'God blessed for ever :' Rom. ix. 5, 'Of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever.' Where the Greek article *ὁ* is added, which the adversaries of this truth deny to be added to *Θεός* when it is attributed to Christ ; and John, as if he had foreseen what work would be made of this *solum* against the deity of Christ, gives us an antidote against it : 1 John v. 20, 'We are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life ;' where the article also is added.

The answer to this is various.

1. Some* understand the word *μόνον* *one*, not alone, or only, and so translate it, that they may know thee the one true God ; and the word is often of that signification.

2. Others say Christ here acknowledgeth the Father the only true God, because the Father is the fountain of the Deity. In regard of the *essence*, there is no prerogative, but only in respect of the *persons*, which consists only in order and personality, as the Father is said to beget and the Son said to be begotten. That may be affirmed in one respect, which cannot in another ; as Mark xiii. 32, the Son is said not to know the day of judgment, but the Father ; not the Son of man, but the Son absolutely ; he knew it not as man, but he knew it as God.

3. Others say, to omit many other answers, that this particle *only* is put to exclude false gods, which is most satisfactory. It excludes none that are of the same essence, but all that are not. The Son is not excluded from being God, as Deut. xxxii. 12, 'So the Lord alone did lead them,' *Jehovah*. The Son is not excluded by that name *Jehovah*, for Christ led them, and in their murmuring they are said to tempt Christ, 1 Cor. x. 9. It was Christ who is called the angel of the Lord that conducted them, Exod. xxiii. 20,

* Zanch. de trib Eloh. part. 1, lib. 4, cap. 10.

Exod. xxxii. 34, Isa. lxiii. 9. The word *only** doth not exclude the Son; for then, when it is joined with the Son, it should exclude the Father from being God. But it is joined with the Son, Isa. xlv. 22, 'Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else; I have sworn by myself, that unto me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear.' That this is understood of Christ by the best interpreter is evident, Rom. xiv. 10, 11, where, speaking of the standing of all before the judgment-seat of Christ, he proves it by this place. 'For as it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.' In Isaiah, it is spoken in opposition to idols, as appears by the 20th verse; and according to the apostle's understanding, it was Christ that spake there, asserting three times there was no God besides him, ver. 21, 22. Shall the Father therefore be excluded from the Deity, because Christ saith so positively there is no God besides him? There is no place to which that in the Romans can refer, but to that in Isaiah.

Again, worship is due only to God: Mat. iv. 10, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.' Doth this exclude Christ from being worshipped, to whom it is due from the angels as well as from men?

Again, this word *only* in other cases doth not exclude, but include, those that have the same respect with the person spoken of, as Deut. i. 35, 36, God swears that not one of that generation should see the good land save Caleb; yet Joshua is not excluded, who manifested the same integrity in the report of Canaan after they had been to view it.

Again, when Paul saith, he 'determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified,' 1 Cor. ii. 2, doth he exclude the knowledge of God the Father, and the knowledge of Christ glorified as well as crucified? No, surely.

Again, what is attributed to the Son, the Spirit is not excluded from; therefore what is attributed to the Father, neither the Son nor the Spirit are excluded from. As when it is said, Mat. xi. 27, 'None knows the Father but the Son,' is the Spirit excluded, who 'searcheth the deep things of God,' and 'knows the things of God'? 1 Cor. ii. 11. And indeed, in common expression, the word *only* is not exclusive of any that are in conjunction with a person we speak of; as when we speak of a tradesman that usually hath the choicest commodities of this or that sort, we say he is the only man in London for such wares; we exclude not those that are partners with him in his trade, but all that are not in conjunction with him in it.

4. The scope of the place doth evidence that the Father is called the true God, in opposition to idols;† for when Christ saith all power was given to him, that he might give eternal life to as many as were given to him,—those that were given to him were among the Gentiles as well as the Jews,—he here respects them both. The Gentiles worshipped many gods, the Jews worshipped one God, but rejected Christ as mediator. Now the knowledge of both is necessary to salvation. In the first clause, he respects the multiplicity of heathen gods; in the other, the Jewish contempt of the mediator. So then the expression excludes only the heathen idols. In 1 Thes. i. 9, 'How you turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God,' God is called the true God in opposition to idols.

5. The deity of Christ is asserted in every verse almost before and after, and therefore is not excluded in this. He hath 'power over all flesh, to give eternal life' to them; too great a power to be entrusted in the hands of a mere creature, and too great a gift to spring from a mere creature. The one

* Gerhard. Harm. cap 180.

† Ibid.

is an infinite power, and cannot be managed by a finite head and hand ; it requires omniscience to the due exercise of it ; the other is an infinite happiness, and cannot be bestowed and secured by a finite strength. This eternal life is the knowledge of God ; there must be a work upon the understanding and upon the will to produce this saving knowledge. These two faculties in spiritual things lie open only to the touch of an infinite power. The power over all creatures extends to their inward motions, thoughts, turnings of their heart for the good of the elect, which is only the prerogative of God, not of a creature. He had a glory with the Father before the world was, ver. 5 ; not in his humanity before it was in being, therefore in the deity ; and the glory conferred upon his humanity cannot be managed without a conjoined divinity.

Again, the knowledge of the Son is made a cause of eternal life, as well as the knowledge of the Father. It is not to be thought that the knowledge of any creature should be counted equally necessary to salvation with the knowledge of God ; if our happiness consist in the knowledge of both, then both the Father and the Son are of the same nature. The term *Father* manifests it ; God was the Father of Christ from eternity ; Christ was with him before any creature was in being ; if the Father were the eternal Father, the Son must be an eternal Son.

6. I might offer another consideration of this place, viz., that *the true God* may refer to the veracity of God the Father in his covenant with Christ, and his promises to us (the Syriac seems to carry it this way ; ' To know thee to be the only God of truth '). A fiducial knowledge is here meant, a knowledge accompanied with faith and trust in God, the ground whereof is particularly the veracity and faithfulness of God in his promise ; and the truth of God in his promise to man is founded upon the truth of God in performing his covenant with Christ, which Christ insists upon, ver. 4, 5, where he speaks of his own office performed by him in the manifestation of God's name, as a work God gave him to do, and claims a glory as due by a former transaction between them. Or thus, I cannot give eternal life unless I be glorified : by this thou wilt evidence thyself to be a true sincere God, not giving me an empty power ; and men's knowing and understanding this, and thereby knowing me to be thy Christ, sent by thee, will be their way to eternal life. Or it may be understood of the promises declared by the prophets of exalting him after the performance of his work upon the earth ; and by the glorifying of him after he had made himself a sacrifice, God would declare himself a God of truth in the performance of the covenant made with him, and the promises published by the prophets, the knowledge whereof would be a motive to and ground of faith, and so the means of eternal life. So it is life eternal to know and believe in God as a God of truth in his promises made to and concerning Christ, not only in his mission but his exaltation. The word *ἀληθινός* is many times taken so* as *ἀληθινοὶ λόγοι* (Plutarch), and *ἀληθινοὶ φίλοι*, true friends, that do not deceive. The Father so may be said to be the only true God, as he was the person promising Christ to us, and covenanting with Christ about the work of redemption, and the person to whom the mission of Christ is ascribed. Christ was the person promised to us as a Redeemer, and the person covenanting with God the Father about redemption. Christ now being upon a plea for himself and his people, that he might be enabled to glorify God, urgeth the declaration of God's veracity, as the only means whereby eternal life might be conveyed to men. And since veracity is an essential attribute, neither the Son nor the Holy Ghost are excluded from being the true God ; but the Father is

* Stephani Thesaurus.

considered here in a personal transaction, as standing in the present economy. I will not urge it, because it is an untrodden path, but leave it to consideration, which perhaps it may somewhat deserve.

We may see in the text,

First, The cause or nature of happiness, knowledge, by way of excellency and exclusion of everything else as the cause of happiness.

Secondly, The object of this knowledge, God and Christ.

1. God : to know him in his nature, perfections, effluxes in and through Christ ; to know him as one.

2. Christ : to know him as commissioned and sent by God ; in his person and in his offices.

3. Conjunctly : God and Christ, God in Christ. It is *ἐν διὰ θεοῦ*, as 2 Pet. i. 2, 'through the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ,' *i. e.* through the knowledge of God in Christ ; and Rom. i. 5, 'grace and apostleship,' *i. e.* the grace of apostleship.

Observe,

1. Knowledge of God and Christ is the life and happiness of the soul. What meat is to the body, that, and more, are divine truths to the soul. In the clear sight of God as the supreme good, the understanding is satisfied, the will filled with love, and all the desires of the soul find the centre of their rest. The vision of God in heaven is the satisfaction of the soul, and the imperfect knowledge of him here is our imperfect felicity. It is the root of eternal life, which will spring up in time to mature fruit, to the knowledge of him above, which is the complete happiness. True happiness ariseth from truth known and goodness beloved.*

2. Eternal life and happiness consists not in any worldly thing, not in riches or honours. The soul is a more excellent part of a man than the body ; the happiness of it must consist in something which is the proper object of it ; and more excellent in the rank of beings than the understanding is in the rank of faculties. The operations of that conduce more to felicity than the actions of sense.

3. The knowledge of Christ is as necessary to happiness as the knowledge of God. If a man had the knowledge of God in as clear a manner as the angels have, yet without a knowledge of Christ he were as remote from happiness as the devil. Though the knowledge of Christ be not simply necessary to the angels who never fell, and so needed not a mediator, yet it is necessary to us, who are obnoxious to God's wrath, and so need a reconciler, because of the enmity ; a redeemer, because of our slavery ; a refiner, because of our filthiness ; a mediator, because of our distance to bring us to God.

4. The true knowledge of Christ is not only a knowledge of his person, but a knowledge of his commission as sent. It is a material question that the pharisees asked our Saviour, 'By what authority doest thou these things?' though they asked it maliciously, to get advantage against him by his answer. We could have no comfort if we did not know and consider by what authority he acted in this great affair. Our security in Christ lies in his authority from God. Faith hath comfort in him as he is the Son of God ; comfort in him as he is God's commissioner, but higher comfort as he is both joined together. As being the Son of God, he hath ability ; as being sent of God, he hath authority. He might have been the Son of God without authority to such a work, had he not been commissioned ; he might have been sent of God, and commissioned by him, and not have done the work he was appointed, had he not been the Son of God, and so had an infiniteness of

* Senault.

ability. Christ sets out both these as the ground of faith to us: 'Glorify thy Son,' ver. 1; 'whom thou hast sent,' in the text.

Those which I insist upon are,

Doct. I. The knowledge of God, and Christ the mediator, is the necessary means to eternal life and happiness.

Doct. II. The true and saving knowledge of God is only in and by Christ.

I. For the first. The knowledge of God and Christ the mediator is the necessary means of eternal life and happiness. It is the knowledge of God as discovered, not in the creatures, but in the Scripture; a knowledge of God through faith in Christ, which is able to make us wise to salvation. The tree of knowledge in paradise became our death, and the tree of knowledge in the gospel becomes our life. The knowledge of God and Christ doth not only free us from a dark and obscure walk, but is 'the light of life,' John viii. 12. The true knowledge of God and Christ is an effectual and infallible means of salvation, because upon such knowledge faith doth depend: Psal. ix. 10, 'They that know thy name will put their trust in thee.' Though no man can come to Christ unless the Father draw him, yet God draws every man by the cords of a man, by such means as are proportioned and fitted to the principles of his nature. Now it is as proper for a man to be led and drawn by the light of knowledge, as it is for a spark to fly upwards, or a stone to move downward. The drawing by the Father to Christ is explained by God's teaching of men, and men's apprehension of that teaching; and between men's thus learning of that which God teacheth, and their coming to Christ, there is an essential connection: John vi. 45, 'Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me.'

This knowledge is a certain, full, and persuasive assent to the unity of God, his nature, his word; to the mediation of Christ, and God's communications through him grounded upon a divine light, as plain and evident to the mind as any natural light is.

I. In general, what kind of knowledge this is.

II. That this is necessary.

III. In what respects it is necessary.

IV. What are the properties of this knowledge, whereby it is distinguished from other knowledge which is not saving.

V. Use.

I. What kind of knowledge in general this is.

1. There is a speculative knowledge: a study and knowledge of God upon the same account that men study and desire to know other things that are excellent and delightful; as both the contemplation of God in creation, and the contemplation of God in redemption, afford notions very gustful to a delicate understanding. Thus a man speculatively knows God and Christ when he is well skilled in the revelation of God, the history of Christ, the analogy between the types and predictions of Christ in the Old Testament, and the accomplishment of them in the New, in the person of Christ. A knowledge of God by creation many of the wiser sort of heathens had, who have discoursed excellently of the nature of God: Rom. i. 21, they are said to 'know God.' A knowledge of God by revelation, the Jews had in the Old Testament, who yet rejected the Son of God; a knowledge of Christ many learned men professing Christianity have, who know Christ in the bark of the letter, not in the sap of the Spirit; as the Jews knew him under the veil of types, but were ignorant of his person when he came among them. This is such a knowledge which men have of a beautiful picture, or a comely person with whom they have no acquaintance; or as an astronomer knows

the stars without receiving any more special influence from them than other men, or the inanimate creatures.

(1.) This knowledge is natural. In regard of natural education, whereby they suck in and vent those notions rooted in them; in regard of natural principles in the soul, which conclude something of God, though nothing of Christ. There are some fragments of the broken tables of the law in the hearts of men, whereby they know the being of a God, and something of his nature, helped by reason and discourse, removing imperfections from him in their conceptions of him, and comparing him with things that are most excellent in their apprehensions. But there is no natural knowledge of Christ; for all the sparklings of creatures, and all the letters of the law laid in them and put together, present not a syllable of a mediator. But this natural, educative, and historical knowledge, is not that here meant. It is a spiritual knowledge our Saviour intended; for he intended that which hath a connection with eternal life, which must have a principle framed by an higher hand than that of nature. As things visible in themselves cannot be seen without a visive faculty and eye, and that well tempered, and rightly disposed for the perception of the object, so neither can God, who is wholly spiritual, be spiritually known by evangelical revelation, without the cure of the mind from those films which are upon it by corruption. A spiritual principle is as necessary to a saving knowledge of God, as a visive faculty is to the discerning of visible objects.

(2.) This is not enough. A man may know an artificer by the excellency of his workmanship, without any affection to his person: Rom. i. 21, 'They glorified him not as God, nor were thankful.' Not one of all those philosophers, as one observes,* though they discoursed of one God, had some right apprehensions of his nature, yet ever composed one hymn in the praise of him; though there be among their poets some hymns writ in the praise of their fabulous deities. They pleased themselves barely in those inquiries and reasonings, without descending to that piety which is the true end of knowledge; and though their understandings had some glimmerings of light, their wills sunk under their imperious unrighteousness. If a speculative knowledge were our felicity, the devil, who is in the deepest misery, would be seated in the highest happiness. He knows God, because once he enjoyed him; he knew Christ, because he most feared him; he did profess his knowledge of him, when scarce any upon earth well understood what he was: Luke iv. 34, 'I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God;' yet, notwithstanding that knowledge, was desirous to continue in the exercise of his government, and the practice of his impieties: 'Let us alone.' His knowledge is not his eternal life, but his eternal death. Since, therefore, God is known in his perfections more by the devils, his professed enemies, than by any of the sons of men, this knowledge of God, which is the way to eternal life, is such a discovery which never did nor ever can enter into the hearts of devils. Speculative knowledge of God, without any further relish, is like the knowledge of the nature of meat in the brain of a starved philosopher, that hath not a bit of bread to put into his stomach. Speculations are often a torment without affections. No man could find a repose in the knowledge of God in heaven without love in his will, as well as light in his mind. Light without heat preserves not a man from chillness and shaking.

(3.) Yet though this speculative knowledge be not saving, it is useful in the world. It is a promise that the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord: Isa. xi. 9, 'They shall not destroy in all my holy mountain, for

* *Estius in loc.*: 'What they knew naturally, in those things they did corrupt themselves.'

the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord.' Not a saving knowledge, because it is of another kind than the knowledge in the mountain of the Lord, and subjectively, in the earth, the carnal part of the world, as distinguished from the holy mountain. By such a knowledge in man, God secures his people from the evil of the world, and justifies his proceedings in the hearts and consciences of the world. It is also useful to the person that hath it; for without this he could never have a saving knowledge; it is the foundation of a spiritual: though a speculative might be without a spiritual, yet a spiritual cannot be without a speculative; a foundation may be without a superstructure, but a superstructure can never be without a foundation.

2. There is a practical knowledge of God and Christ, which is not only an acquaintance with God, but a laying up his words in our hearts, Job xxii. 21, 22; which is not a floating knowledge in the head, but a knowledge sinking to the heart; not a knowledge in the brain, but efficacious to make an union with him: 1 John v. 20, 'He hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true,' where union follows upon knowledge. The speculations of God may fill the head, and the heart be empty of a sense of him, and the life barren of an imitation of God. This doth not deserve the name of a knowledge, but in the apostle's account is truly an ignorance: 1 John ii. 3, 4, 'Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith I know him, and keeps not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.' Such answer not the end of knowledge; and it can no more rationally be called a knowledge of God, since it hath no life and soul in it, than a dead carcase can be called a man. Such a knowledge, that hath no life in it, cannot be the means to eternal life: what hath not life cannot convey life. The devil's knowledge is a dead knowledge, but the knowledge of God in an angel, joined with obedience to God in his practice, is his eternal life. The other is knowledge floating in the brain, buoyed up by some corrupt lust from sinking further. This is wisdom 'entering into the soul,' 'truth in the hidden parts,' Ps. li. 6; not a flourish in the paper, but a letter; the knowledge of the object, and an embracing the end of that knowledge. For though it may be a clear knowledge in the head, yet it is really a deep ignorance, a fluttering bubble, because the notion of God is not sucked in for that end for which it is let out; it is made known, that it may be melted into an affectionate practice, and not lie like a hard lump in the head. Every man ought to know God in order to his embracing him; and without this affection and love he knows nothing as he ought to know: 1 Cor. viii. 2, 'If any man think that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know.' For a man may have knowledge enough to stuff his head, but if barred from his heart and affections, it stands but begging in the outward court for admittance. The thinking of God and Christ with the head, and embracing Christ with the heart, are two distinct things; as the seeing a country in a map, and by travelling over it with our feet, are different kinds of knowledge. The one is a knowledge of the truth, the other 'an acknowledgment of it as it is after godliness,' Tit. i. 1. When the notion of God is not only pictured in the head, but the image of God engraven upon the heart; when the stamp in the heart is like that in the word, as a counterpart of a writing: a heart to be his people, as God hath a heart to be our God: Jer. xxiv. 7, 'I will give them an heart to know me; they shall be my people, I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.' The evangelical promise is not so much to give us an head (though that is included), as a heart to know God.

For,

(1.) This is an enlivening knowledge. A spiritual knowledge is always attended with a spiritual life; a new man, and such a knowledge as is after the image of God, go together: Col. iii. 10, 'Having put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.' As the natural image of God consisted in understanding and will, so the spiritual image of God by grace consists in a rectifying those faculties; the understanding with a spiritual knowledge, and the will with a spiritual bias. The faculties we have from God as creator by nature, the operation of those faculties about their proper spiritual objects we have by grace. As the apostle distinguisheth 'the form of godliness' from 'the power,' 2 Tim. iii. 5, so he doth a form of knowledge from the life of it, Rom. ii. 20, which is a knowledge in the letter, not in the spirit, verse 29; the one is a picture wherein every limb is painted, the other is quickened and animated with a divine life. Speculative knowledge is as the light of torches, guiding, not heating; this as the sun, which both directs and warms; a fire felt as well as seen; truth known, and truth used as a compass to sail by. When the knowledge of the nature of God is impressed upon us for imitation, and is, as the conference of Christ with his disciples, inflaming the heart, Luke xxiv. 32, and driving away the cold affections towards God; when righteousness is understood as well as judgment, and that as a path, and a good path, to walk in; when we are not only directed to the path, but are pleased with the goodness of it, and the approving wisdom enters into the heart, and the knowledge of it becomes pleasant to the soul, Prov. ii. 9, 10; when there is not only a knowledge of God, but a liking to retain it; a sight of the sun, and a delight in his beams; a knowledge of the fire, and approach to its heat; a mighty pleasure in God and Christ, as a sweet ointment poured forth;* when God is known and embraced as the chief good and ultimate end; Christ known and embraced as the way to be at peace with God, and an honourer of him: such a knowledge as is not only like animal spirits in the brain, but vital spirits in the heart enabling for action; not like a cloud hanging in the air, but distilling in fruitful showers for the assistance of the earth.

(2.) A likening knowledge. When we know Christ crucified in the conquest of our sins by his death, Christ glorified in the elevation of our souls by his ascension. To know a living God with a dead heart is at best but a carnal knowledge, a dead knowledge, unsuitable to a living object, which calls for lively actions. To know Christ crucified, and have no efficacy of his death; to know Christ risen, and lie closed up in the grave of sin; to know Christ is ascended, and have creeping affections upon the earth: this is a notion of Christ, not a knowledge of him. That is the teaching of God, when the truth is learned 'as it is in Jesus,' Eph. iv. 21. Powerfully directive, conforming the soul, as it did the human nature of Christ, to the will and mind of God, when the understanding is not forced to comply with the corrupt appetite of the will, but the will conformed to the true notions of an enlightened understanding. Such a knowledge, which ravisheth the mind, quickens the prayers, seasons the converse, and fortifies against temptations. Such a knowledge as wraps up the soul in admiration, spirits the will to operation, allures it to a close union with the truth discovered, till it be like a leaven working in the will, and shaping the whole man according to its own mould. The fixing our eye on God by a spiritual knowledge derives a tincture from him, dyeing our souls into his own likeness; if the

* By knowledge, the Jews for the most part, if not always, understand a practical knowledge: and by wisdom, a theoretical.—*Jacchiades in Dan. i. 4.*

life doth not differ from that of an infidel, the knowledge, though as high as an angel's, is no more saving than that of a devil.

And if knowledge be not thus,

[1.] It is useless. No knowledge in the world is commendable but as it is digested into will and reduced into practice. Should the eye direct the hand and foot, and they never move, what advantage would the body have by the eye's direction? It is all one to be blind, and not to have the end of the visive faculty answered by the motion of the members.

[2.] It is not commensurate to divine revelation. It is not a knowledge according to the word, if it be not like the word, the instrumental cause of it; if it be not 'sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit,' the rational part from compliance with the corrupt affections of the sensitive, and so a destroyer as well as 'discerner of the sordid thoughts and intents of the heart,' Heb. iv. 12. No material thing is perfectly known, unless it leave an impression upon those senses which are requisite for the knowledge of it; neither is divine truth known, unless it leave a full and commanding impression upon the mind, the faculty of knowledge. And because divine things are revealed for their goodness as well as for their truth, and the truth revealed in order to the apprehension of their goodness, it is not knowledge suitable to the intent of divine revelation, if the goodness be not swallowed and digested, as well as the truth chewed.

3. There is an experimental knowledge of God. Speculative knowledge is a sound of words and thoughts, experimental a sense of them, and God hath not left the soul without a spiritual relish, any more than he hath left the body without a tasting palate. And, therefore, one* calls it well *gustus spiritualis judicii*; it is a witness of the truth in us, 1 John v. 10. There is a knowledge of Christ after the flesh, an admiration and esteem of him, as some excellent moralist that hath published eminent precepts for the regulation of human conversation. This is no more a saving knowledge of Christ than the knowledge of a philosopher's thesis, or Seneca's moral aphorisms, amount to. It is a putting Christ in the same balance with them. But a spiritual knowledge of Christ is not only a relish of those precepts, but a draught of Christ in the soul, a receiving the spiritual emanations of God and Christ upon the heart. It is to know God in the power of his grace, and Christ in the virtue of his life, Philip. iii. 10; God in the streams of his love, and Christ in the sweetness of his blood; when we see him upon the cross, and taste him in the soul, which is not only a knowledge by the understanding, but a knowledge by a spiritual sense, Philip. i. 9.

There is such a knowledge as this. The Scripture expresseth the knowledge of God by the acts of sense, as well as by the acts of reason; for we have more experience of things by sense than we have by discourse. After the discourse of anything with all the reason in the world, there must be recourse to sense to make it plain and evident; hence ariseth the advantage of similitudes drawn from sensible objects, which clear what mere reason is not able to do. We find the knowledge of God set out by the acts of sense; as by tasting, 1 Pet. ii. 3, 'If so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious;' or relishing, Mat. xvi. 23; by smelling, 2 Cor. ii. 14, 'The savour of his knowledge;' by feeling, 1 John i. 1; often by seeing, which, being the quickest and most piercing sense, represents things to the understanding more clearly than bare report. And this kind of knowledge is necessary to happiness, for without it we can have no clear nor worthy notions of God, but more likely disparaging ones; as a man that never saw the stateliness

* Junius.

of London, or any city like it, cannot mount higher in his conceptions of it than that it may be a little better than the best market town which he hath seen in his country, but he is not like to have conceits of it according to the greatness of the place, the magnificence of the buildings, the gallantry of the people. When once he comes to behold it, he will find his former conceptions of it to be vastly short of the beauty of the place. He would scarce be convinced of it without a sight. Indeed, this knowledge of God is imperfect here because of our present state. But some experience there is here answering to the vision hereafter, as a map of that which the soul is travelling to a sight of. This kind of knowledge of God is banished from the unclean spirits; they have lost the savour of what they knew of God, and feel nothing but the power of his wrath.

This differs from a speculative knowledge,

(1.) In the means and manner of knowing; not in the object. The object is the same in both God and Christ, the difference lies in the manner of their apprehension. One is by a common created understanding, the other is by an understanding given for that peculiar end: 1 John v. 20, 'The Son of God hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true.' One is a conception of God, the other a taste; one knows God as a man by human strength, the other knows God as a Christian by sense and a divine knowledge; one is by 'feeling after God,' Acts xvii. 27, the other is by God's breaking out in divine beams upon the soul, like a 'day star arising in the heart,' 2 Peter i. 19. One is by the natural strength of the understanding, improved by hearing, meditation, discourse; the other is the effect of an infused faith and the Spirit's operation; one knows God in the Scripture by reading, the other by relish, and finds something in his own heart agreeing with it; what he reads with his eye is drawn by a divine pencil in the soul. There is a knowledge of a thing without us, and a knowledge of a thing within us. Men know there is a happy heaven, and heathens entertained it as an universal notion; but a believer knows it in himself by some beamings upon his heart,—Heb. x. 34, 'Knowing in yourselves that you have in heaven a better and an enduring substance,'—which do more powerfully break in upon him in the time of sufferings. So there is a knowledge of God from reason, nature, report, and a knowledge of God in ourselves by the workings of his grace. A man may know this or that meat to be sweet by report, yet not have the knowledge of it by taste; the one depends upon the strength of his head to conceive, the other upon the goodness of the palate to relish it. Though both have the same object, yet they are not the same knowledge; he that prays from right principles, and he that prays from wrong, have the same object of prayer; both pray to God, but they differ in the manner of their praying, which makes one acceptable, the other not, and therefore the object doth not make our prayer right; so neither doth the object make our knowledge saving. Yet the first knowledge makes us in a capacity for this, but it is frequently without it; a man may know that which he doth not spiritually desire, but he can never spiritually desire that which he doth not know. As the manner of Adam's knowing sin before and after his fall was different, so is the manner of knowing God. Adam knew sin in the theory before he was guilty (for, knowing the law, he could not but know what was contrary to the law, and what acts would violate it), but when he turned offender he knew the power of sin, felt the evil of that which he did before but understand. A natural man knows God as Adam did sin before his fall, he understands something of his nature; but a gracious man feels the influences of God, and finds himself under the power of divine grace.

(2.) In the clearness of knowing. This is such a knowledge that can better describe God, from his spiritual illapses into the soul, than the clearest reasons of men with all their speculative notions. A blind man may know something of the reasons of colours, but he cannot know them so feelingly as he that hath eyes in his head. A man may know wine by the sight and smell, but not so clearly as when he tastes the sweetness, and feels the cordial warmth of it in his stomach. Speculative knowledge is such a knowledge as Peter and John had of Christ's resurrection upon the report of Mary Magdalene, John xx. 2, 3, &c. They saw the linen clothes, and no body there, which increased their belief and knowledge; this was a dim-sighted knowledge to that which Christ gave them by his apparition. When they could see both his hands and his sides, this was an experimental knowledge; and when he pronounced peace to them, this was a knowledge of interest, an assurance given that they were interested in the happiness and fruits of his resurrection. There is an excellency in divine knowledge that cannot be discovered by the tongues of men or angels; an experience and spiritual sensation renders a man more intelligent than all discourses can. As the natural sense best judgeth of sensible objects, so doth the spiritual sense of divine. He that hath tasted honey hath a more lively knowledge of it than the most learned man that never tasted the sweetness, or felt the operations of it. Nor can any conceive so clearly of the excellency of the sun, by the discourses of the richest fancies, as by seeing its glory and feeling the warmth of its beams. A man's own sense will better inform him of the beauty of the heavens than the elevated reasonings of philosophers. Divine truth acted upon the heart, and felt in its influence, is more plainly known than by discourse and reason. I would rather have the feeling which a sincere soul hath of God, than all the descriptions of him by a notional apprehension. One is knowledge in the notion, the other in reality; the one is the effect of well-educated nature and common grace, the other the fruit of a spiritual eye-salve, Rev. iii. 18, and an inward breathing; the one is a shining upon the head, the other a shining into the heart, 2 Cor. iv. 6.

(3.) In regard of the effects. This works the effects which the other is too weak to produce. A little experimental sense of the majesty of God brought Job more upon his knees than all the pressing discourses of his friends, or his own knowledge before his affliction: Job xlii. 5, 6, 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see thee; wherefore I abhor myself.' A glimpse of God will bring forth more saving fruits than all the reports of him to the ear, or speculations in the mind. God and Christ felt, refresh the soul more than the lifeless notions of them. The inward virtue of bread tasted and digested refresheth the body more than the colour and figure can delight the eye. The contemplation of meat may please a philosophical understanding, but the turning it into our nature, the having it in our body, strengthens and cherisheth the whole man. There is a pleasure in the historical knowledge of God and Christ, a pleasure in the meditation of the nature of God, the ends of the coming, passion, and resurrection of Christ, the nature of his mediation. But what is this to the powerful operation in our hearts, and the conveyance of his life into our souls? Just as meditation of health by a sick man comes short of the pleasure of feeling health in his veins, and every member of his body. The one is like the delight a man takes in seeing a city in a map, the other like the contentment he takes in seeing the strength of the place, the beauty of the buildings, the harmony of the government, and the observations he makes thereupon.

4. There is a knowledge of interest ; or an interested knowledge of God and Christ. Experimental knowledge Peter and John had of Christ's resurrection when Christ appeared to them, interested knowledge when he pronounced peace to them. Though the knowledge of the excellency of God, and of Christ's going to heaven, is a ground of comfort, yet an interest in this is the formal part of our felicity. What satisfaction can we have, if we have no part in God, if Christ went not to heaven *for us* ? The devil hath a knowledge of God in the theory, but a torment from that knowledge in the reflection. The knowledge of God, without hopes of an interest in him, is terrifying. While Adam retained his purity, the attributes of God were cordials to him, he could delight in his goodness, have access to his power, refresh himself by the faithfulness of God ; innocence and interest see nothing but what is highly ravishing in God ; but all the divine perfections which took the part of innocent man, while he continued faithful to the law of his creation, render God terrible to fallen nature ; there can be no happy knowledge of God, with a satisfaction to the soul, without a recovery of his lost interest. That knowledge which renders us as happy as we can be in this world, is to know God in covenant our God ; to know God as our Father, Christ as our Mediator ; to know Christ as a surety paying our debts, and God as a creditor accepting the payment for us ; to know God in his eternal counsels as a Father ; to know Christ in all his offices as our perfect Redeemer, settling and securing our happiness upon a stable bottom ; to know Christ as our Lord, John xx. 28 ; to know God so as to be accepted by him, and to know Christ so as to be 'found in him,' Philip. iii. 8, 9 ; to know God not only as a pardoning God in his nature, but a pardoning God to our souls (such a knowledge God promiseth, Jer. xxxi. 34, 'They shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest : for I will forgive their iniquity'), as also a knowledge of him as our Saviour and Redeemer, Isa. lx. 16. That is a happy knowledge, when we can say with Paul, 'Christ, who loved me, and gave himself for me,' Gal. ii. 20, when we can feel Christ dwelling in us by faith, 'the hope of glory,' Col. i. 27. A speculative knowledge is contemplation, this is fruition ; that elevates us in admiration, this springs up in affection ; that is like the knowledge of a picture, where the features of the person are commended by strangers to them, this like the knowledge of the friend, whose picture it is, and the remembrance of the sweetness of his disposition, his cordial affections, &c., which possesseth the soul with a more sensible delight than others can take in the comeliness of the piece.

These four sorts of knowledge are not equally necessary. The speculative is necessary as a *foundation* ; practical, *essentially necessary* ; experimental and interested, *necessary to the comfort of knowledge*. The two first are necessary to the being of a Christian ; the two latter, to the well-being. The two first together, constitute our happiness ; the two latter sweeten our imperfect happiness in this world. Indeed, experimental knowledge and interested are necessary in regard of the matter of the knowledge, though not in regard of the actual sense and knowledge. We cannot have any initial happiness, without the influence of God's grace, without a share in his favour ; but both these may be without the actual sense and perception of them. Speculative, is knowledge received ; practical, knowledge expressed ; experimental, the relish of it ; and interested, the foretaste of happiness. A speculative knowledge is like that of the queen of Sheba's, at a distance ; an experimental is like her sight of the order and glory of Solomon's court, that left no more spirit in her.

II. This knowledge of God is necessary. Religion and true grace is called *wisdom*, in the Proverbs. Wisdom is the knowledge of the highest things. No wisdom without the knowledge of truth, therefore no wisdom without the knowledge of God, the prime truth, the chiefest good, whence all truth and goodness in other things flow. This is the portal.* No happiness can be without truth and goodness; all religion consists of them, all felicity is composed of them: truth to be known, goodness to be embraced, by the creature, else no communication of happiness to it. Knowledge and love fit us for acquaintance with, and enjoyment of, God. We actually embrace him by love, after we perceive him fit for our embraces by knowledge. Knowledge imprints the similitude and *idea* of the object upon the understanding; love draws out the soul to close with the object so understood. By knowledge, God conveys himself in his glorious perfections to our view; by love, we give up ourselves to him. By knowledge, we see God; by love, we enjoy him. By knowledge, we see what is enjoyable, and worthy our affection and fruition; by love, we enjoy what we see. Still, remember that this is not to be understood of a common knowledge of God, where the gospel is preached; it is such a knowledge which is given by Christ to those he hath a charge of; it is such a knowledge that is not only the effect of Christ's universal power over all flesh (for so the general preaching of the gospel is, whereby men attain a common knowledge); but such a knowledge as those only have who are 'sanctified by faith,' Acts xxvi. 18. He had 'power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life,' *i. e.* he had power to propagate the gospel among the Gentiles, that the knowledge of God might be given to those that had been given him by his Father; whereby it is manifest that it is a knowledge different from the common knowledge of the gospel.

1. This was the subject-matter of the ancient gospel promises. This God promised in the evangelical dispensation, when he would manifest himself in the riches of his glory, and treasures of his goodness to his creatures: Isa. xlix. 23, 'Thou shalt know that I am the Lord;' and the chief happiness of the church in the confluence of the Gentiles to her, as the foundation of all religion, is his manifestation to them, and their clear view of that manifestation: Isa. xix. 21, 'And the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day.' It is the peculiar of the gospel: Hos. vi. 3, 'Then shall we know the Lord.' When the knowledge of God shall be spread over the world by the great prophet, in the teachings of his Spirit, then should men have an ardent zeal to increase in the knowledge of God; and in this knowledge our spiritual life consists. We shall live in his sight. How? By the knowledge of the Lord. By the knowledge of God in this life, men have foretastes of the life to come. It is by the knowledge of God in Christ that we see the sword of justice sheathed, which guarded heaven against us, the bowels of mercy enlarged to open heaven for us. It discovers God calmed and appeased, gives us delightful views of him, and a secure and complete happiness.

2. There is no way of conveying happiness can be conceived without this. Our ignorance must be removed, whereby we may understand God, as well as our perversity, whereby we may seek him. All sin begins in folly, ignorance, and forgetfulness of God: Ps. xiv. 2, 'None that did understand and seek God.' First, 'The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.' From that ignorance sprung up corruption and abominable works. What the psalmist speaks of one, ver. 1, he speaks of all, ver. 2, 3, 'They are all gone aside,' and the not understanding of God was the root of it, Rom. iii. 11.

* *Nulla res, qualiscunque est, intelligi potest, nisi Deus priùs intelligatur*, is a maxim in the schools.

The root of our misery must be removed, to plant that of our happiness. God hath ordered knowledge to be the first step to salvation, so that none are saved that come not in by the way of the knowledge of God revealed in the gospel: 1 Tim. ii. 4, 'Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.' The gospel being nothing else but a manifestation of God in Christ, a knowledge of this precedes the application of salvation. As the sun doth not make his heat to be known but by his beams,* so God doth not save according to his ordinary dispensation, but by the knowledge of himself, though the discovery of himself, in divers ages, hath been various and by degrees. As the light at the dawn is more obscure than that which is near the approach of the sun to the horizon, so there was a more obscure knowledge of God, and the Redeemer, at the time of the first promise. Adam might not know well what to think of God when he saw himself expelled paradise, just after a gracious promise of a deliverer. It was somewhat brighter at the giving the law, when God would give man some dark shadows and pictures of Christ, and when himself would be known by his name *Jehovah*, and the conduct of his angel. It was clearer, in the times of the prophets, when the chariot of the Sun of righteousness was approaching to the world, and the light broke out before him; but a more glorious discovery, when this Sun did arise and appear in the earth; yet, from first to last, every dispensation was made up of some discovery of God, the manifestation of his name, the declarations and representations of the Messiah. The knowledge of God and the Redeemer, being the design of God in every age of the world, is no less necessary now than it was then; and, indeed, the knowledge of no other thing can confer a blessedness upon us. Whatsoever makes another happy, must be greater and better than that which is made happy; but, since nothing in the world is better than the soul of man, all the knowledge of inferior things cannot constitute him blessed. The knowledge of God and Christ can only fill the insatiable mind, satisfy the vast desires, and settle the staggering soul.

3. The happiness of God consists in the knowledge of himself, his own perfections, and delight in them. God is the object of his own happiness.† The knowledge of God himself is the felicity of God. No being is really happy without reflection upon, and knowledge of, that happiness. If God should be happy by the knowledge of anything else but himself, that which he did contemplate and know would be greater and better than God, because his happiness would depend upon it. Felicity can never be in anything inferior. God hath nothing higher and better than himself to contemplate. This gave him a satisfaction before the world was, and this would still be his blessedness, if all things should be reduced to the depths of nothing. Since, therefore, he created the world, to communicate himself and his own happiness to the rational creature, felicity cannot be attained by anything less than the knowledge of the supreme good according to the creature's measures. The angels themselves are only blessed in the contemplation of him, and affection to him. In being encompassed with his bright rays, and having their affections inflamed by him, Mat. xviii. 10, 'they behold the face of God.' As God's knowledge and fruition of himself makes up his felicity, so the knowledge and fruition of God composeth our happiness.

4. The happiness of heaven, which is the ultimate and complete happiness of the soul, consists in a knowledge of God. The sight of God is made by our Saviour the reward of purity of heart: Mat. v. 8, 'The pure in heart shall see God;' and to see him as he is, in the glory of the other world,

* Amyraut de l'Évangile, pp. 148, 149.

† Eugutin. de perenni Philos. lib. iv. cap. 13.

1 John iii. 2, 3, when all the rational faculties shall be satisfied with light, and the desires replenished with love. The privation of this knowledge is hell; the punishment consists in a banishment 'from the presence of the Lord,' 2 Thess. i. 9. If felicity, in the highest region, consists in a sight and knowledge of God, the happiness of the soul must consist in the same, according to the imperfect degrees. If a perfect happiness cannot be without a perfect knowledge, imperfect cannot be without a partial knowledge. When we are acquainted with him, we are not only at peace, but we can delight ourselves in the Almighty, and lift up our faces unto God, Job xxii. 21, 26. Knowledge of God here is the dawn of heaven; knowledge hereafter, the meridian of it.

5. This is that the devil endeavours most to hinder. He is the enemy of man's happiness; he envies man a better state than himself hath; his time is spent in barring the door against it. The course he takes is to bemist the understanding faculty, 'that the light of the gospel of Christ might not shine into it,' 2 Cor. iv. 4. He put our first parents upon the knowledge of other things to deprive them of the knowledge of God. He is always pecking at this seed of knowledge. If he cannot kill it, he will sow some cockle to choke it. All errors in the mind have the devil's blessing, and knowledge his curse. His kingdom is a kingdom of darkness. Light is an enemy to his dominion, and he to light. When the knowledge of God breaks in upon the heart, the devil falls like lightning from heaven, as well as at the preaching of the gospel by the disciples, Luke x. 18. It expels his, and introduceth another empire. This is our happiness, which is the devil's grief. That must be necessary for us, which God's and our great enemy took all the pains to stifle.

III. In what respects is this knowledge of God necessary? We owe duty to God as we are creatures; we are unable to perform it as we are guilty offenders. We must know God to know our duty; we must know Christ to know the way of performing it; we must know God, therefore, in the perfections of his nature, and Christ in the sufficiency of his mediation. We must know God in his ravishing goodness, his affrighting justice, his condescending mercy, his adorable wisdom, his unshaken veracity; we must know him as offended by sin, as pacified by Christ. Without the one, we shall not be humbled; without the other, we shall not approach to him. We must know him in his precepts, else how can we obey him? in his promises, else how can we trust him? We must know Christ in his offices, as an atoning priest, as an instructing prophet, a protecting and governing king. We must know him in his transaction with his Father, descent to the world, his return to heaven, in his humiliation on earth, exaltation in heaven; we must know him upon the cross and upon the throne, and the ends of both his states: Philip. iii. 10, 'Know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings.' How else can we be 'conformed to his death,' or have confidence in his life? We must know him in his nature, without which we cannot have a knowledge either of the truth or efficacy of his satisfaction. The truth of it depended upon the reality of his humanity; the efficacy upon the strength of his divinity. Without this knowledge, how can we believe in him? how can we love him? how can we perform those acts which are necessary to our salvation? This is a knowledge above the knowledge of nature; that is too muddy to be a spring of any spiritual action, raised love or hearty reliance. It is not a knowledge of God by rational deductions, but spiritual illuminations. The knowledge of God in the creatures is as the dawn; the knowledge of God in the Scripture is as

the day-spring. But what is either dawn or day-spring to a blind eye? The day-spring may be in the world, yet not in our hearts; we cannot work without light, and though there be the greatest light, we cannot work without sight.

That which is precedent to eternal life cannot be without the knowledge of God.

1. Without it there can be no motion towards God, or for God. Without a natural knowledge of God we can never think of him, or have any natural motions to him; without a spiritual knowledge, we cannot perform any spiritual action. Without knowledge, we cannot act as rational creatures, because all actions tend to rest. No creature acts for that end that it may always act, but acts for some end wherein it may acquiesce. That which is our proper rest must be known, we can never else order our motions to it. Everything that hath rational or sensitive life must have some kind of knowledge, to act suitable to its station in the world, and the nature it is endowed with. A beast cannot live without some knowledge, by natural instinct, of the proper food for the maintaining the life of it; a man cannot act rationally, though he have the shape and life of a man, without a habit of first principles which is by nature put into him. So neither can a man act spiritually without truth put into the heart by grace, as an indwelling and abiding habit, a truth known, and a truth dwelling in us and abiding with us for ever, 2 John ver. 2. There are the 'first principles of the oracles of God,' and of 'the doctrine of Christ' to be known, Heb. v, 12, vi. 1, before we can go on to a spiritual perfection; answering in a spiritual creature to those first principles which are in every man by nature, without which he cannot act as a rational creature. The apostle implies the necessity of those principles, while he blames them for sticking there without making a further progress. As knowledge is necessary to the being of any action, so a various kind of knowledge is necessary to the various kinds of actions. Natural knowledge is necessary to natural actions, moral knowledge to moral actions; so supernatural knowledge is necessary to supernatural actions. As the acts are, so must the knowledge be; supernatural acts cannot flow from an understanding stuffed only with natural principles, no more than rational acts can be the products of a brutish fancy and instinct; that is, as a beast cannot act rationally unless he had the reason of a man, so a man cannot act spiritually unless he hath the understanding of a Christian, an understanding given whereby to 'know him that is true,' who ought to be the proper centre of all our actions, 1 John v. 20. The whole body is dark if the eye be so, Mat. vi. 22, 23; the whole body of a man's acts are acts of darkness if the mind be blind. As the mind is, so the nature is; corruption of nature began in wrong notions received in the mind, whence those actions sprung which laid Adam and his posterity as low as hell without the grace of God. There must be then other notions in the mind, and other principles in the heart, before we can be fit for recovery out of natural misery. While the eye of the soul remains muddy, all our perceptions will be tinctured with that corruption; a suffusion in the eye will cause a confusion in the acts; what the eye is to the body, that is the understanding to the soul. The truth was in Jesus, it must be in us as it was in him; not as a loose notion, which would have engendered staggering motions in the service of God and work of his mediation, but as a rooted habit, a law in his heart, established as firm in his heart as it was in the sanction. Since, therefore, all our actions towards God are to be both a reasonable and a spiritual service, there must be a reasonable and a spiritual knowledge as the foundation, to raise up action as the building.

(1.) There can be no worship of God without it. Since God made us for his own glory, that we might do those things whereby he might be honoured, we must know the excellency of his nature, and what is suitable to him. It is impossible to glorify him whose honour and greatness we are wholly ignorant of, Ps. cxix. 25. David was God's servant, had a desire to serve him, and therefore desires God to 'give him understanding, that he might know his testimonies.' Worship is the fruit of knowledge. God promises to be known of the Egyptians in the time of the gospel, and then they should do sacrifice and oblation, Isa. xix. 21. The Egyptians knew there was a God, a supreme God, but they never worshipped him till they came to know him in the gospel revelation. 'In that day' he would be known to them. In what day? In the day when they should speak the language of Canaan, ver. 18; in the day when he should send them a Saviour, ver. 20. There is no worship acceptable to God without the knowledge of Christ, and access by him. Daniel opened his window, and prayed to God 'towards the temple,' a type of Christ. He that comes to God must not only know that he is, but he must know that he is a rewarder, Heb. xi. 6, not by a natural knowledge, for so the heathens both knew the being of God and the bounty of God, but a distinct knowledge of God as a rewarder and acceptor in Christ; for that the apostle means when, in describing this way of worship, and giving examples of it, he gives instances of the faith of the worshippers and their respecting God in Christ.

[1.] Without this knowledge of God we should never worship him in a right manner. We must know that he is, before we can direct any religious act to him; so we must know what he is, before we can direct any religious act to him in a right manner. If we would worship him out of love, we must know that he is amiable; if with fear, we must know that he is powerful and just. Whatsoever the principle of the worship is, it must have knowledge for the foundation. Without a knowledge, we cannot affect him; without a strong knowledge, we cannot love him ardently. If our love be low, our worship will be slight, and want that affection which is a necessary ingredient in it. According to the weakness of our knowledge is the slightness of all our acts towards God. When we understand not his justice, we shall presume upon him; when we are ignorant of his glorious majesty, we shall be rude with him; unless we understand his holiness, we shall leap out of sin to duty; and the steams of our lusts will be as nimble as the desires of our souls. If we are ignorant of his excellency, we shall want humility before him; if we have not a deep sense of his omniscency, we shall be careless in his presence, full of roving thoughts, guilty of vain babbling, as if he wanted information, Mat. vi. 6, 7. Ignorance renders a worship false, as well as a zeal erroneous, Rom. x. 2. If we worship God from custom, and not from knowledge of him, we render him no better a worship than we should render to the impostor Mahomet, if his religion were the religion of our country.

[2.] We should be apt to worship some falsity and fancy instead of God. Such an one that knows not God would be as easily induced to worship some angel or saint in a glorious apparition, as a man that comes to court to see the king, and knew him not, might be apt to imagine that some person of quality he saw richly dressed, and bravely attended, might be the prince. The heathens, having not the knowledge of God, stamped every great benefactor a deity, and adored every one that was highly useful to their country as a god. Without a knowledge of him, we shall be apt to seize upon anything from which we find assistance as a god; and, like some heathens, worship the first thing we meet in a morning. If we know not God, yet

since we have naturally a notion that there is a God, we shall be apt to have false conceptions and misrepresentations of him. To worship what we misconceive, is not to worship the true God, but a god coined and moulded by our own fancy; and since false conceptions of God are degradings and disparagements to him, all worship guided by them is a worship of that notion and image we have set up in our mind, and not a worship of the true God. It is at best a worship like that of the Athenian idolaters, a worship of an 'unknown God,' Acts xvii. 23; they knew not who he was, and they knew not why they worshipped him. Certainly, as worship is a flower in the crown of the Deity, so a worship of him according to his infinite perfections is a debt we are bound to pay, and therefore bound to know him, that we may give him his due; otherwise we shall worship, not a Scripture God, but a fancy god, a god made up by the capricious of our own brains, and modelled according to our own genius. It is an observable and difficult place, Amos v. 25, 'Have you offered to me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?' Did they not offer sacrifices to God? The worship of Moloch was entertained in the following ages. God denies that they worshipped him all that forty years. What if we should conjecture this as the reason, because all the while they had notions of God according to the Egyptian idols? The adoring the calf was but an imitation of the Egyptian worship; while they had a false notion of God, likening him to the Egyptian Apis, all the worship they performed to the true God being tainted with this notion and conceit, was not a worship of God. 'Did you offer to me,' when you had such ridiculous and unworthy conceptions, that you could find out nothing in the whole frame of nature as an image to represent me, but that of a calf? It was a sign what unworthy conceits of me did lodge in your minds, which rendered your worship unacceptable and displeasing to me; which conceits were not displaced from their heads by the breaking of the idol.

[3.] Such an ignorant worship is certainly idolatry. It is not only a wrong object draws upon men the guilt of idolatry, but a right object worshipped in a wrong manner. When we worship him not suitably to his perfections, or not according to his command, Lev. xvii. 3, 4, 7. God commanded that an ox, or lamb, or goat, intended for sacrifice, should be brought to the door of the tabernacle; not killed in the camp, or out of it; if they did, he would count them guilty of blood, and, verse 7, esteems it no more than as a sacrifice offered to devils. The tabernacle being a type of Christ, Heb. ix. 11, this command signified, that whatsoever was offered to God out of Christ was of no value to him; as hateful as murder, and esteemed by him as if it had been offered to devils.

Since, therefore, nature cannot represent God* in his brightest apparel to us, we cannot worship God by all our natural knowledge of him; for as by nature we rather know what God is not than what he is, so by nature we may rather tell what worship is not worthy of him than what is. We cannot then worship God without the knowledge of him. We cannot know him in Christ, by all the strength of nature, without divine revelation; and indeed it was a natural notion among the heathens, not to receive a form of worship but what had a stamp of a divine authority; therefore all those lawgivers who settled any religion among them, pretended an intimate acquaintance with some of their esteemed deities, to make their form of worship entertainable. There is a necessity, therefore, of the knowledge of God, and of Christ, to present a worship to God acceptable to him.

(2.) No obedience to God, without the knowledge of him. The will of

* Mornæ. verit. Relig. Christian. cap. 20, pp. 388, 390, 391.

God is the rule of obedience, and Christ is the pattern of obedience. Obedience to God is an imitation of God in righteousness and holiness ; we must therefore know the perfections of God, which we are to imitate, as well as the law of God, according to which we are to regulate our actions. Obedience therefore is described* to be nothing else but knowledge digested into will, affections, and practice. The motion of the will cannot be regular without a touch of the understanding. If the spring of the will's motion be from the affections and appetite only, it is an erroneous motion in regard of the order of nature, though to a right object. Now, where there is a defect in the first concoction, there will be a defect in the second and third : defect in knowledge will cause an error in practice. Alienation from God's life, *i. e.* from an imitation of his life, as well as animation by a living principle contrary to him, is rooted in the 'blindness of the heart,' Eph. iv. 18 ; and the reason men take steps from one sin to another, and are fruitful in iniquity, is because they know not the Lord, Jer. ix. 3. When men are ignorant of the true God, they will not want Pharaoh's apology for their sin : 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go ?' Exod. v. 2. The whole mass of vice in the world ariseth from the false ideas of God, whom men shape according to their depraved fancies ; as the Ethiopians paint the image of their gods black, according to their own dark colour. Hence men receive encouragements to all kinds of vice, when they think God such an one as themselves. There is no truth nor mercy among the ten tribes, because there was 'no knowledge of God in the land,' Hos. iv. 1, 2. Had they known the nature of God, they could not have sinned at such a rate, as if they had passed beyond the limits and censure of any law.

All obedience ariseth from knowledge. As error in knowledge was the first deformity of man, and the cause of all the rest, so the knowledge of God is the first line the Spirit draws upon the soul, whence, as from the first matter, all those beautiful graces that appear in every region of the soul are formed. Every action of obedience, as it must be quickened with grace, so it must be informed with knowledge. Holiness must be a holiness of truth, springing up as a branch from truth as a root, Eph. iv. 24. True holiness, or in the Greek, 'holiness of truth.' As all rebellion against God steams up from a false conception of him, so goodness and holiness break out of the womb of a sound notion of him. The mind is first renewed ere the 'new man is created in righteousness,' Eph. iv. 23, 24. The apostle renders it impossible for a man to know God and willingly break his commands, and gives such a pretender to divine knowledge no better term than that of a liar : 1 John ii. 4, 'He that saith I know him, and keeps not his commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him ;' he hath not a grain of a divine habit of truth resident in his heart. 'Know thou the God of thy fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart,' is David's directory to Solomon, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. No service without knowledge, no sincere service without a spiritual knowledge of God in covenant. As ignorance of God is the cause of sin, so the knowledge and sense of him is the best antidote against it. Men cannot sin freely under an acquaintance with infinite fury. The common knowledge of God and Christ brings forth some fruits of a sort of obedience in men, and cleanseth them from the common and barefaced pollutions of the world ; the common knowledge of God hinders many wicked men from hurting in his holy mountain. What more glorious fruits than bare appearances would the spiritual knowledge of God and Christ produce and ripen in the world ! 2 Pet. ii. 20. If we know him in the glory of his

* Sibbes's Bruised Reed, p. 241.

grace, in the amiableness of his nature, what a choice delight should we have in our approaches to him, and our actions for him ! The more clearly he is understood, the more he is beloved ; and the more he is beloved, the more readily he is obeyed. The angels that behold his face run most cheerfully to perform his errands, Ps. ciii. 20 ; and no doubt but the perfect illumination of the glorified souls is a partial cause of the steadiness of their wills. Whatsoever looks like obedience, and is not informed by knowledge, is no more an act of true obedience than the action of a man in his sleep can be called a human action, since it is no product of his reason, but a start of his volatile fancy. Paul's questions were orderly when he was charged by Christ, first, ' Who art thou ? ' then, ' What wilt thou have me to do ? ' Let me know whom I am to obey.

(3.) No grace can be without the knowledge of God. Some knowledge of God may be without grace. The devils are as much filled with one as they are empty of the other. But it is not conceivable how grace can be without knowledge. The knowledge of God in the text may be called eternal life, because all graces, which are the seed of eternal life, grow up from that as a root. In the change of the soul there is an act of vision before an act of transfiguration ; the removing the veil before the turning the heart, 1 Cor. iii. 16. The eye is opened, light darts upon the understanding, and thence beams upon the will. The glory of God is beheld before the frame of the heart is changed, 1 Cor. iii. 18. The whole work of grace is therefore called ' light,' as the whole state of nature is called ' darkness,' 1 Peter ii. 9 ; as the understanding is the leading faculty, so knowledge, the privilege of the mind, is the directing principle that leads, and the will follows : the enlightenings of the one make men immediately capable of the quickenings of the other. As the common knowledge of God makes men capable of sin, which a beast, because of the want of understanding, is not, so the special knowledge of God in Christ puts men in a capacity for grace. The philosopher determines that moral virtues cannot be without intellectual. All divine motions in the soul are regular : every wheel in the watch moves in due order ; the faculties are not jumbled together ; the understanding commands, and the will obeys. Light first discovers, and will embraceth. The new creation,* as well as the old, begins with a *fiat lux*, whence all the creatures were to derive their beauty, and are more excellent and serviceable as they are endued with a more sparkling light. The knowledge of God and Christ is the chief ingredient which makes the composition of the inner man. As without light there could not be a visible world, so without this there cannot be a spiritual. As the common engrafted notions of God, left in men's hearts by nature, are the root from which common moral virtues grow, so the spiritual knowledge of God in the gospel is the root from whence divine graces branch themselves. No form without matter, no grace without knowledge of God. No active principle can be without an object ; God is the object of grace. Whence the new creation of a man is called a ' translation from darkness,' Col. i. 13, and renewed men are called ' light in the Lord,' Eph. v. 8 ; when the mind, which was stuffed with base and unworthy opinions of God, is made by the Spirit the candle of the Lord, spreading its light through the whole man. All those things which ' pertain to godliness,' whereof grace is not the meanest, are ' given through the knowledge of him,' 2 Peter i. 2, 3. This knowledge of God and Christ, shining upon the heart of a natural moral man, makes his moral virtues to commence spiritual graces ; as the more generous and commendable acts of a beast would cease to be brutish actions, and become human, if he had a rational

* Vines' Impostures.

understanding infused into him. Without the knowledge of God's justice, we shall not fear him; without knowledge of his ability and fidelity, we shall not trust him. Without knowledge of his goodness we shall not seek to him, and without a knowledge of his majesty we shall not humble ourselves before him. So that, without the knowledge of God, there will be no grace in the principle or habit.

As to instance in particular graces.

[1.] Faith cannot be without the knowledge of God and Christ. Without the knowledge of God, we know not the ultimate object of faith; without the knowledge of Christ, we know not the immediate object of faith and the way to come to God. This grace therefore is set in a double seat by divines, in the understanding and will; it is properly a consent of the will, which cannot be without assent in the mind. Knowledge is antecedent to faith in order of nature: 2 Tim. i. 12, 'I know whom I have believed;' Isa. xliii. 10, 'That you may know and believe that I am he.' Who can read that doth not know his letters? who can believe that understands nothing of the perfections of God or offices of Christ? What image is in the inward sense was first in the outward organ; what fiducial frame there is in the will was first ushered in by assent in the understanding: Heb. xi. 6, 'He that comes to God must know that he is.' The knowledge of the bare existence of God will not bring the creature to him; but the knowledge that he is a rewarder will, because this knowledge includes an apprehension of some good in the object known, and so hath a spirit of life in it to quicken the affections and elevate the heart, which was before dead to any such motion. That knowledge which acquaints a man with no good in the object known will never excite any motion to it. No man can come to God, who is infinitely above him, unless he knows him to be infinitely good and ready to receive him. Who will apply himself to a prince or any other man for help, whom he thinks to be severe, sour, tyrannical, one more like to scoff at his misery than relieve him? There is, therefore, a necessity of the knowledge of God as a God of tender bowels, and therefore a necessity of the knowledge of Christ, in whom only he discovers himself to be a gracious Father. The spiritual knowledge of him in Christ is as an emission of virtue from the loadstone, that draws the iron to cleave to it. We must know the goodness the fountain, and his faithfulness the executor, of promises, and his power that enables him to be as great and good as his word. We never reasonably trust a man that we know not fit to be trusted: we cannot trust a God whom we know not to be the highest goodness. Men by reason know that there is a God, but it is so dim in the discovery of his perfections that it sees not light enough to raise it up to any close act of a fiducial dependence on him. The discovery of God in Christ in the heart sets the whole man a-crying out, Soul, return to thy rest!

[2.] No desire for God without it. The Israelites' stomachs were never sharpened for Canaan, but wambling towards Egypt, till they tasted the grapes of the country. The apprehension of God as true makes us adore him; the apprehension of God as good makes us desire him. The more clearly we know his perfections, the more fervently we shall desire both to enjoy him and imitate him. How soon will such knowledge bud in desires, and blossom and flower in good affections! 'If thou hadst known, thou wouldst have asked,' John iv. 10; if thou hadst a clear knowledge, thou wouldst have had an eager affection. The clearer the representations, the more nimble the desires. Doubtful and wavering conceits of the goodness of a thing keep back the appetite from any motion. If we know not how full a spring God is, and ready to emit his streams, how can we thirst for

his boundless communications to us? Where there hath been a relish there will be an appetite, 1 Pet. ii. 3; desire of the word riseth from a taste that the Lord is gracious. Knowledge of a thing always precedes our appetite to it. A toad, not having the knowledge of its own venomous nature and the excellency of other creatures, can never desire the being stripped of his own or invested with the other. This desire after God springs not from a bare speculation, but a strong impression, a spiritual taste; for a bare speculation hath no more strength to make a motion in the will than the poetical descriptions of far countries can persuade a potent prince to take a long voyage for the conquest, or a merchant to venture his stock thither for a trade. The more distinct and savoury our notions of God and his goodness are, the more ardent flame will be in our wills. The more distinctly a man conceives of the excellent relish and wholesomeness of this or that kind of meat, the more will his appetite be invited to taste of it, especially if before he hath sensibly enjoyed a satisfaction in it. And indeed, a strong appetite is a great sign of a spiritual illumination. It is ignorance of God chokes any longing for him, and makes us either not to desire the enjoyment of him, or beg for it very faintly. Men that never put up a quick prayer to him, never had any knowledge of God in them; and when any of us pray faintly, our knowledge of God is not actuated in us. Without some knowledge of God, men will rather shake off all thoughts of him, all wishes for him, and no more desire the fruition of him than a blind mole desires to see the light of the sun. Their language is with those in Job, 'Depart from us,' not Come unto us, Job xxi. 14. Where there is no knowledge, there can be no fruition; and where no desire of knowledge, there can be no desire of enjoyment.

[3.] No love to God without knowledge of him. Though a thing be made up of delights, and hath an amiableness interwoven in every part, yet, if it be not known, it cannot be affected. We cannot love God 'with all our hearts,' with the affective part, till we first love him 'with all our minds,' with our reason and intelligent part, Mark xii. 30. Love always supposeth the knowledge of the beloved object, since it is nothing else but *perfectum judicium de bono amato*. Good cannot allure the affections, unless it be apprehended, and knowledge cannot inflame the affection unless the object be imagined as good: both must concur to the exciting love. None can pay a debt of love to anything till he knows it justly deserving and challenging that love. No man in the world can be beloved by another till something be seen in him as lovely, either the wisdom of his head, the sweetness of his nature, the beauty of his person, or the obligingness of his carriage. How can we have any elevated affection to God, unless we understand the amiableness of his nature, the infiniteness of his perfections, and the expression of them for the good of mankind? How can it be expected any can have a heave of affection to Christ, who understands nothing of those treasures of knowledge, grace, and wisdom wherewith he is replenished, who knows nothing spiritually and feelingly of the design of his coming, his low condescension, his yearning compassion, his full goodness, and his sincere affection? Without it, we shall value God and Christ no more than a swine doth a pearl, a child a learned book, or a prince a heap of rubbish, no more than the Jews did the divinity of our Saviour hid in the weak casket of his humanity. The beams must be united together in the burning-glass, and shine directly upon the heart, before the affections will take fire. The daughters of Jerusalem seemed to scorn him, and reproach the hot affections of the spouse, as if unworthily placed, or too fond in their exercise, till a glimpse of knowledge by her description quickened them with some heat of love, which kindled in them desires of seeking him: Cant. v. 9, 'What is thy beloved

more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?' whereupon she begins a description of his beauty, and then, Cant. vi. 1, they desire to seek him with her: so soon may a little spiritual knowledge of Christ dropped into the heart turn a scoffer into an admirer. Had the Jews known Christ to be the Lord of glory, they had never crucified him, 1 Cor. ii. 8; they had turned adorers instead of murderers. The mind must be spiritually illuminated to see God in an evangelical lustre; it must be filled with astonishing and affecting notions, of God before the heart can have a valuation of him, and a disesteem for the things of this world. The apostle indeed saith, 1 Peter i. 8, 'Whom having not seen you love,' but he doth not say, 'whom having not known you love.' There is a knowledge of invisible things by faith, which takes possession of the heart by the ear, and attracts the affections. Ignorance of God must be removed before an affection to him will take place, since it is not only a cause but a part of our enmity to him, Eph. iv. 18. We may have the knowledge of a scholar without the love of a Christian, but we cannot have a Christian love without a Christian knowledge and savoury apprehension of God and Christ. Unless we know the nature of God, we may love some false thing instead of God; and unless we know the nature of Christ, the union of his two natures, and the fulness of grace, we can never love him after a right manner.

[4.] Joy and delight in God. I mean that delight which is a duty, not that which is only God's dispensation; an active, not a passive, delight. Who can delight in music that cannot hear it, or be pleased with the scent of a rose that cannot smell it? Who can delight in God that hath no sense of the goodness of his nature, and the happiness of fruition? Who can delight in his ways, who doth not understand him as good and indulgent in his precepts, as he is sweet and bountiful in his promises? If we did know him, we should be as easily drawn to rejoice in him, as by ignorance we are induced to run from him. Such charms would be transmitted to our hearts as would constrain a joy in them, in spite of all other delights in perishing pleasures. Knowledge of God is a necessary preface to a spiritual joy in him, Ps. civ. 34. First, by a sweetness tasted in meditation, and then a delight in God, the object of it; and according to the apprehension we have of the object, are the degrees of our delight in it. It is all one to a blind man, be he in a palace richly furnished, or a dungeon hung with cobwebs. What pleasure can a man ignorant of God's nature and delightful perfections, and that represents him through some mistaken glass, which imprints unworthy notions of God in his mind, what pleasure can such a man take in approaching to God, or what greater freedom can he have in coming to him, than a malefactor in being brought before a judge?

[5.] No repentance without the knowledge of God. The times of ignorance and impenitence are one and the same, Acts xvii. 30. If there be no right conception of the nature of God, there can be no sense of the evil of sin, and the contrariety of our nature to him;* but when the soul sees God and sees itself, it will be filled with self-aborrancy. How can we bewail our offences if we understand not the purity of his holiness, the severity of his justice, the tenderness of his mercy, the irresistibility of his power, and the inevitableness of his wrath?

[6.] No fear of God without it. As the justice of God and his anger must be apprehended before he can be feared slavishly, so the majesty of God and his goodness must be understood before he can be feared filially. Who can stand in awe of a majesty he is ignorant of?† Men, not knowing God's

* *Contraria juxta se posita magis illucescunt.*

† Barlow on Tim. par. i. p. 29.

nature, have often presumed so much upon his mercy, that they have been destroyed by his justice; as some, through ignorance of the true quality of a fruit, have found their death where they expected their pleasure.

[7.] No true patience without it. Since true blessedness consists in the spiritual and affectionate knowledge of God as the supreme good, no man can be truly content under crosses, who doth not apprehend the goodness and fulness of God and Christ. All patience not founded upon this bottom is a brutish stupidity. The apostle lays the courage of the believing Hebrews upon their spiritual illumination: Heb. x. 32, 'After you were illuminated, you endured a great fight of afflictions.' When their light was great, their patience was steady; and they had not only a contentedness under sufferings, but a joy in them, because they had an experimental sense and knowledge of God as a rewarder, and had some sweet foretastes of the rich inheritance he had provided for them: ver. 34, 'You took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that you have in heaven a better and more enduring substance.' The feeling of Christ, and the tasting his sweetness, is the best antidote against temptation. He that knows no richer sweetness than is in the devil's baits, will easily be exposed to the danger of them. Without this knowledge, the slight impressions on men will be like a few heat drops, dried up by a scorching temptation almost as soon as they fall.

As none of these graces can be without the knowledge of God and Christ, so

(2.) Without it there can be no acting of any grace. All grace is nothing else but an imitation of God, a resemblance of God's perfections in the creature, and the acting of it a representation of the lineaments of his divine virtues: Eph. v. 1, 'Be ye followers of God, as dear children.' The copy must be known before it can be imitated. It is a conformity to the image of Christ, Rom. viii. 29. All grace is summed up in a conformity to God and Christ; for it is nothing but a restoration of the divine image, a re-implantation of that in the soul, which was defaced and lost by Adam. As the seal leaves the whole print upon the wax, even the least point engraven upon it, so doth God and Christ upon the heart. Every grace is a member and part of the divine image, and answers in some proportion to some imitable perfection of God. If we know nothing of the lineaments of God, how can we make a report of his excellency to the world in our actions? How can we express ourselves in any virtue, if we know not the prototype, the first pattern? The want of the knowledge of God made all the heathen virtues trivial things, mere shadows; the knowledge of God and Christ could only tincture and dye them into divine graces. Humility proceeding from some sordid humour or by-respects is not a grace, but when it springs from a knowledge of the condescensions of God, or contrariety to God, or a knowledge of the humility of Christ, it is then a grace.

How can we return lively affections to him, if we know not the emanations of his love? How should we be at a loss for holiness if we understood nothing of the holy nature of God, and his hatred to sin? How would the consideration of God's justice against sin help us in the exercise of our justice, in the mortification of our affections to it; and the knowledge of the patience of God under affronts received by us make us patient and submissive under strokes inflicted by him! It is this makes the Christian more signal in gracious actions towards others. How readily would his love break out to others in an imitation of God's love to man! What a tender and compassionate disposition would be manifested to men if there were an actuated knowledge of God's mercy and compassion to us! The consideration of God's veracity would render men faithful in promises; the perfec-

tions of God, if more spiritually known, would bring forth more of those pleasing fruits in the soul. It is impossible an act can be without an object; nothing is grace but as it is conversant about God, or hath a respect to God. There can be no act about an unknown object. There can be no form without matter, nor any acting of that form but in matter; no grace without knowledge, no acting of grace but in knowledge. The frame of grace is raised upon the infused notions of God; illumination precedes renovation of the will. As the right motion of the will supposeth an enlightened mind, so the acting of grace in the will implies a present and actuated knowledge of the object about which it is conversant. There is no faculty excited in any act but by some object; that object is not entertained at first in any power of the soul, but in the understanding, that first propounds the object as worthy and suitable to be followed by the other powers of the soul, whose office it is to act. All impressions upon the lower faculties are made by the highest, as all motions depend upon the highest sphere in the heavens. There must therefore be a distinct knowledge of God. God abstracted from his perfections, his power, holiness, faithfulness, love, is not the object about which any grace can be conversant, but God as revealing himself, clothed with such excellency as suit and answer the creature's necessities. If I act faith, I must conceive of his power to relieve me; if I act faith upon his promise, I must conceive of his faithfulness and truth to make good his word. We cannot work without light, nor act grace without the knowledge of God and Christ. If we must be 'perfect as God is perfect,' we must know the perfection of the copy we are to follow. The more knowledge we have of God, and of the nature, offices, and communications of Christ, the more distinct are the actings of grace.

(3.) No growth in grace without it. As the degrees of our knowledge are, so are the degrees of our grace: Rom. xv. 14, 'You are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge.' 'Growth in grace' is promoted by 'the knowledge of Jesus Christ,' 2 Peter iii. 18. The one is the root, the other the branch; the root may be without the branch, but the branch can never grow without a root. As the root is strengthened, so are the branches; what is in the root is communicated to the branches. If love flames more vehemently, it is by the addition of the fuel of knowledge: Philip. i. 9, 'That your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment.' Love, which is a grace that adorns us in the world, and is a part of the glory of heaven, burns hotter as our knowledge is clearer. A firm and stable knowledge is as necessary to the increase of love as to the being of love; 'Επίγνωσις signifies a clear knowledge. Fruitfulness in every good work depends upon the increase of the knowledge of God, as the fruit of the ground upon the dew of heaven: Col. i. 10, 'Being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.' The strength of grace is promoted by the increase of knowledge: 'A man of knowledge increaseth strength,' Prov. xxiv. 5. The strengthening the foundation is a strengthening the building. All graces depend upon the increase of faith, and faith is the firmer by an increase of knowledge. 'The path of the just,' or his walk in the ways of God, is expressed by a 'shining' or growing 'light,' Prov. iv. 18. As there was more truth, so there was more grace by Christ than by Moses, John i. 17. As there was but obscure truth under the law, so there was but weak grace; when truth shone, grace flourished; as the plants renew their strength with the spring's sun. The law made no such discoveries of God as were revealed by Christ. The communication of the greatest knowledge of God was reserved for the honour of the great Prophet, and the full effusion of grace was reserved for the honour of his royalty.

All the declarations by the law could not give so much knowledge of truth as the gospel, and therefore make no such impression of grace upon the soul. Truth and grace go hand in hand together, and spur on one another. Truth excites grace, and grace spurs on to the inquiry after truth. Christ himself had not been full of grace unless he had been full of truth, thoroughly acquainted with the nature of God and mysteries of his will: John i. 14, 'full of grace and truth.' It is the fulness of his human nature, for he speaks of the Word as made flesh and dwelling among us. And accordingly, when he prays for the increase of the disciples' graces, and their progressive sanctification, he prescribes the means: John xvii. 17, 'Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.' The word is nothing else but a discovery of God, which affords motives to holiness, and can strengthen the soul against all the invasions of the devil, that envies grace, and endeavours to rife it. A spiritual knowledge of God would spring up in delightful thoughts of him, and those would be as a refreshing influence to all the graces of the new man.

(4.) No continuance in grace without it. True grace cannot be totally lost, but it may miserably decay. True grace will decay, and pretended grace will quite wither without it. As it is impossible any man can close with God in Christ without a knowledge of him, so it is as impossible that he can persist in that state without the continuance of that knowledge. Knowledge of God is part of the 'anointing of the Spirit, which teacheth the believer all things,' 1 John ii. 27. Grace is the divine lamp in the soul, which lives and burns by the oil of the Spirit's teaching; a lamp will out without oil to feed it, and grace will burn dim without knowledge to supply it. The apostle owns the knowledge of Christ to be the anchor that keeps us from being tossed to and fro like children, Eph. iv. 13, 14. Ignorance is the mother of inconstancy in the ways of God; the *unlearned* and *unstable* go by couples, 2 Peter iii. 16. Where there is no knowledge of God to ballast, there is no security against the force of winds and waves. Those that are unlearned in heavenly wisdom will be unstable in heavenly ways. The want of root made the temporaries wither: unless we *know* God, we cannot *follow* on to know him, Hosea vi. 3. It is as natural for a saving knowledge of God to press on farther as it is for a counterfeit knowledge to draw back. But an experimental sense will preserve the soul from apostasy: John iv. 14, 'Whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst,' *i. e.* he shall never thirst for anything else; for this he cannot but thirst, till he comes to a full fountain. It is not a savoury knowledge of Christ if it be not attended with a thirst for more. Where there is only a sensitive, carnal apprehension of God and his truth, there may be some resolutions, some pangs, but the fit will quickly cease. The silly conceit of a bread and water from heaven, that should satisfy their hunger and quench their thirst, which might free them from toil and sweat in the world, made some Jews with lively affections cry out, John vi. 34, 'Evermore give us this bread.' Christ by bread meant himself, and by eating he meant faith; they understood it of earthly bread, and had their affections accordingly; but when they understood the truth of the case they 'turned their backs upon him,' ver. 66. How soon were their affections extinguished, which had nothing but a carnal apprehension for a foundation! It is a 'full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God the Father, and of Christ,' that preserves a soul from seduction by enticing words, Col. ii. 2, 4.

3. No comfort can be without the knowledge of God and Christ. Peace as well as grace is multiplied by this, 2 Peter i. 2. Acquaintance with God is the channel through which the blessings of peace flow into our souls, Job

xxii. 21, 22, &c. All joy in or from God presupposeth a knowledge of him, for spiritual joy is seated in the mind, not in the sensitive part of the soul. All the pleasure that rational creatures have is by an act of their understanding. The light of knowledge begets the light of joy and peace in the heart, as the light in the body of the sun begets the light and shine in the air. The assurance of understanding doth arise from the 'acknowledgment of the mystery of God the Father, and of Christ,' Col. ii. 2; because the knowledge of those is a means to beget assurance. In the light of God we enjoy the light of comfort: Ps. xxxvi. 9, 'In thy light we shall see light. There may be a knowledge of God, and a terror with it. The devils' knowledge renders them less at ease in themselves than an ignorance would; though their knowledge of God be greater than others', yet it is more distasteful to them; they have only a knowledge of God in his justice to terrify them, but no hopes of his mercy to pacify their troubles. Yet without it we can no more have any fruition of God, than a man whose senses are bound up with sleep can rejoice in the presence of beautiful pictures. As the operations of the will depend upon the touch of the understanding, so the comforts of the soul depend upon the clearness of the understanding contemplating the object. The best good, though never so near us, cannot be comfortable to us while we are under the darkness of ignorance; nor can there be any comfort without the knowledge of Christ. There was in Adam no necessity of the knowledge of Christ, because there was no necessity of his knowledge of a mediator in his innocent estate. He knew God in his nature, and in his personal relations, and his works of creation; but what a misery are we in without the knowledge of Christ as well as God! What pleasure can we have in the apprehensions of an offended and injured God, unless we know him in the methods of his reconciliation, which cannot be understood but by the knowledge of Christ, because no atonement is made by any but him? The more any knows of God without Christ, the more he knows of a deplorable contrariety to him. What spark of joy can he have unless he can see a way of bringing God down to him, or of his ascent to God, unless God would strip himself of his nature to converse with him, or he be unclothed of his corruption to be fit to converse with God? He sees terror as well as sweetness, wrath as well as grace. The knowledge of Christ, as receiving the darts of God's wrath upon himself, to reflect upon the soul the beams of his grace, must step in before the thoughts of God can be comfortable any more to us than to devils.

(1.) No comfort in this life. Without godliness there can be no rational satisfaction, and sensitive comforts deserve not the name of a rational contentment. Godliness and contentment are coupled together by the apostle, 1 Tim. vi. 6. Godliness is nothing but the spiritual and practical knowledge of the mysteries of God. Nothing can have any real comfort without answering and attaining the end of its being. The end of our creation was not simply to enjoy the creature, or satisfy our sense, but to glorify God, to observe the prints of God's goodness, and return the praise to him. The world was made for the manifestation of God's goodness; 'the heavens declare the glory of God' materially, man is to give God the glory of it formally; without this, man hath not a pleasure suitable to the end of his creation. What praise now can any one render to God who knows not the excellency stamped upon his works, knows not his glory and goodness manifested in redemption? All praise of God without understanding is not pleasant to the offerer, and as unwelcome to God as the scraping of a lute by an ignorant hand is to a delicate ear. We are to 'praise God with understanding,' Ps. xlvii. 7, *i. e.* with a knowledge of his nature, his works, his

excellencies in him. We lose the comfort of our being by not answering the end of our creation, and this we cannot do without a knowledge of God and Christ, and so lose the pleasure of those raptures and ecstasies of joy, which an observation and praise of God fills the soul with in secret. What rise is there for this, if we are unacquainted with the matter and object of this praise!

(2.) No pleasure and comfort to one ignorant of God, if he were admitted into heaven. The happiness of heaven consists in a clear knowledge of God, and a pure affection to him. It is as impossible for a man remaining ignorant of God to take any pleasure in him, were he admitted into the local heaven where God displays his glory, as for a blind man placed upon a high tower to relish a delight in the beautiful prospect, so long as he wants eyes to behold it. Such an one would want happiness in the midst of an ocean of it, as a millstone in the midst of the sea wants moisture in the centre, because of the thickness and harshness of its parts. He that takes no pleasure in inquiring after God, and seeing him in the glass of the gospel, would take as little or less in seeing him face to face. An unenlightened mind could have as little delight in heaven, by reason of its ignorance, as an unrenewed will could, by reason of its impurity. A swine that understands not the delicacies of a musical air would rather run away affrighted at a loud concert than diligently listen, and take more satisfaction in a puddle or heap of garbish, things suited to his sense and nature, than in those objects he hath no conception of.

IV. What are the properties of this knowledge of God and Christ, whereby it is distinguished from that knowledge, which is not saving and eternal life.

1. Negatively.

(1.) It is not an immediate knowledge of God and Christ. As we are acquainted with a man face to face when we see his person, and view his features; we have no such knowledge of angels, much less of God. Nay, the things of the world which are visible to us are not known so much in their formal nature as by their operations; we do not immediately know the sun so much as by his beams enlightening the earth, and quickening and refreshing the spirits of all creatures. It is more especially true of our knowledge of God, who is not known immediately in his nature, so much as by his excellent works of creation, providence, redemption, and the revelation of invisible mysteries in his word. The invisible things of God are understood, not by immediate speculations about the nature of them, but by the things that are made, Rom. i. 20.* Those things that are invisible in God, and that cannot be known or seen with an immediate view, do shine forth in his works, both in the first forming them and the constant preservation of them, wherein he discovers such marks of an infinite power and unexpressible goodness, which is the glory of his Godhead, that if they were represented in a glass they could not be more visible. He is encircled with that ocean of light through which no mortal eye ever did pierce, or can approach to: 1 Tim. vi. 16, 'He dwells in light to which no man can approach; whom none hath seen, or can see.' It is used to express the impossibility of an immediate knowledge of God. We see the created light of the sun overpowers the eyes of our body; how much more the glorious light of God the eyes of our souls, since he 'clothes himself with light as with a garment!' Ps. civ. 2. As the sun, though it discovers other things to us by its light, yet by reason of the greatness of its light hinders

* Amyraut. in loc.

us from an immediate sight of itself; so, though God discovers himself in other things to us by his light, yet it is too immense for us to have an immediate knowledge of God. In his appearance to the Israelites, he was covered with a cloud, to shew the weakness of our understandings about divine things; and how easily is it dazzled at his ineffable brightness!

(2.) Nor is it a comprehensive knowledge. When the psalmist had floods of precious thoughts of God in the day, the next morning he was as far from finding him out to perfection as before: Ps. cxxxix. 17, 18, 'When I awake, I am still with thee,' *i. e.* I am where I was; I have made no further progress, but am to begin again, so infinite are thy perfections. Moses, that was dignified with the greatest familiarity with God, could arrive no higher than the sight of his back parts. A beast, by seeing our actions, may better comprehend our nature than we comprehend the nature of God. To know comprehensively is to contain, and the thing contained must be less than that which contains, and therefore if a creature could comprehend the essence of God, he would be greater than God. It is infinitely more difficult for any creature to comprehend the nature and perfections of God, than it is easy, upon the sight of his works, to acknowledge there is such an incomprehensible being; he makes darkness his pavilion and hiding-place. The comprehensive knowledge of himself is only within himself, and none can know God as he knows himself, unless he were God; his name is secret: Judges xiii. 18.

God is the highest in the rank of beings, the chiefest in the scale of good, the supreme in the nature of the intelligent; man is the lowest of intelligent creatures. How can he that is in the lowest form of reasonable creatures mount up to the knowledge of the supreme author of all beings? We are not able to conceive of God as he is, because our apprehensions take their first rise from sense and sensible objects. There must needs then be an infinite distance between our conceptions of God and his nature, as the conception that a man that never saw the sun hath of the sun, by the light of a candle which he hath seen, is far inferior to the glorious nature of that luminary. Christ only knows the Father, and 'he to whom the Son will reveal him;' yet upon Christ's revelation no man can know God comprehensively; not for any weakness of revelation, but incapability in the creature. The ocean hath water enough to fill the biggest vessel, yet it can give no more to it than the vessel is able to contain.

[1.] We cannot comprehend the creatures that are near to us. Not to speak of angels, that are creatures of another sphere, whose nature we are not able to measure, and whose appearances were formidable to the believers under the Old Testament, we find our reasons twinkle at the sight of a star; though we behold its sparklings, we cannot understand fully the nature and dimensions of it. How are our reasons blocked up by clouds of matter from piercing into the nature of a stone we tread on! How are we puzzled to know the soul of an ant, the forms of beasts and plants! Is not the acutest reason too blunt to pierce into their hidden natures? How are we then able to ascend into the cabinets of the almighty Creator! How blind are we in the nature of our own souls, which we bear about in our bodies every day, and feel the operation of in every motion! How then can we 'by searching find out the Almighty unto perfection?' If all the wit of the world hath not been able to content the understanding of man, in the reason of the ebbs and floods of the sea, the intervals of an age, the nature of the sun, the attractive virtue of the loadstone, and a thousand other things which nonplus the reason of man, is it possible to comprehend God? If we know not the works of nature, can we think to know the Author of nature? Are we

ignorant of the nature of the effects, and shall we think fully to understand the cause of them, which infinitely surpasseth them? If we know not the world, which is as a point, it cannot be thought that we can comprehend the circumference itself.

[2.] In heaven, God shall not be comprehensively known. It is true there will be a fuller perception of God, and a clearer notion of him in heaven; the infinite treasures of wisdom and goodness, which lie hid in God to be admired, will be then more clearly seen; yet God can never descend from his own infiniteness to be grasped by a created understanding. For in the highest pitch of glory the soul is but finite, and therefore still too short to enclose an infinite being in its understanding, even to an endless eternity. In heaven, the glorified soul is still but a creature. Heaven glorifies our natures, but doth not make our being infinite; and till a creature can mount to the pitch of a creator, it can never understand the nature of the Deity. When Moses desired to see God's face, or essence, Exod. xxxiii. 18, that God might be known to him as the person of a man is known to another by the discovery of his face, God tells him not, thou *shalt* not see, or thou *mayest* not see, but *canst* not see my face: verse 20, 'For there shall no man see my face and live,' *i. e.* as the Jews expound it,* no created understanding can attain this. That one perfection of his love which we are more sensible of, and are exhorted to know the length and breadth of, yet the apostle tells us in the same breath that it 'passeth knowledge,' Eph. iii. 17, 18, 19; and the peace of God, which is an effect of his love, 'passeth all understanding,' Philip. iv. 7. And though it be said, 1 John iii. 2, that 'we shall see him as he is,' it is most convenient to understand it of the sight of Christ in his visible human nature at the day of judgment, and not of the essence of God; for he speaks of the appearance of God, understanding Christ's appearance, which the Scripture frequently speaks of. There will, indeed, in heaven be a wider enlarging the faculty, and a fuller discovery of the object, greater sparklings of light and glory, enough to satisfy; yet still the perfections of God will be above our comprehensions; the understanding will be dilated and strengthened, a clear light put into it, which is not any species of God, but a spiritual principle created by God to perfect the understanding for the contemplation of him.

[3.] The angels, who have had the fullest vision of God since their creation, cannot know God perfectly; and that upon the same reason, because they are creatures. There must be some proportion between the faculty and the object, but there is none between a finite understanding and an infinite essence. They know God in a more excellent manner than other creatures can do in the world; they stand before his face, they see the signs of his glorious presence; but their contracted understandings cannot comprehend the essence of God, which hides itself in the secret place of eternity. If God could be grasped by any finite understanding, though angelical, he were not infinite. The angels signify as much by the covering their faces before the throne of the divine Majesty, that the majesty of God is too mysterious for the most capacious understanding, Isa. vi. 2. And, therefore, it is generally said that the human nature of Christ,† though being straitly united to the divine nature, he did behold the divine essence, yet could not comprehend it, because the human nature was finite, and a creature.

Nor can we have a comprehensive knowledge of Christ; the Spirit doth take of Christ's, to shew to the believers, John xvi. 14, 15; but not all of

* Maimon. de Fundam. legis, cap. i. sec. 10, p. 6, 7.

† Wolleb. compend. lib. i. c. 16, the humanity of Christ did see God *ὡς*, but not *ὡς*.

Christ's, for all the things of Christ cannot be shewn to any man ; as his divine nature, being infinite and incomprehensible. We know God, as we know the sea ; we behold the vastness of its waters, but we cannot measure the depths and abysses of it. Yet we may be said truly to see it, as we may touch a mountain with our hands, but not grasp it in our arms. We know God to be omnipotent and immense, but we cannot comprehend his power and immensity. Nor can we know the counsels of God ; we may as well expect to span the heavens, and enclose the sea in a nut-shell, as to understand those judgments which are 'past finding out,' Rom. xi. 33. So that this is not the knowledge God requires of us, or that can be called our happiness, but that we should know what kind of God he is—merciful, just, wise, holy, true,—and how those perfections are manifested in Christ. Yet, because we cannot comprehend him, the more we ought, and the more we shall, admire him. Our admirations of the brightness of the sun are greater, by how much the less we can look upon the body of it without winking and shielding our eyes from the onset of his beams : so should they be of God.

(3.) Neither is it a perfect knowledge of God in this life, so far as it is possible for a creature to know him, that is required. Our knowledge of God in this life is as the knowledge of him in a glass, obscure, and apt to be dimmed by the steams and breath of our unworthy affections and notions of him. We cannot arrive to great measures because of the misty cloud upon our minds, the beam of sin in our eye ; our soul, clogged with a fleshly clay, cannot ascend to a perfect knowledge of God. We are like a man closed up in a room, where light comes in at some crannies and chinks of the shutters ; and though the sun shine ever so clearly, he cannot behold the glory of it while he remains thus closed up. While we are in this dungeon of flesh, clouded with sin, we cannot know the glory of Christ, till we are freed from that darkness by taking away the shuts and obstacles. We have still thick scales upon our eyes, and too much of the veil upon our hearts. Paul, that was ennobled with extraordinary revelations, yet pretended to no higher a knowledge of him than 'as in a glass,' and that not clear, but 'darkly,' 1 Cor. xiii. 12. The fuller knowledge is reserved for another life. We must know him here by his name, not by his face ; by his grace, not by his glory. Who can see so well with sore eyes as when the organ is healed ? Christ looks 'through the lattice,' Cant. ii. 9, gives us an imperfect sight of himself. God keeps back much of the knowledge of himself to humble us for our first curiosity in Adam, our common root, and to whet our longings after another world, wherein we shall know Christ no more by a stooping faith, but an ascending vision ; when we shall, as it were, with Thomas, put our hands into his wounds. Yet a perfection in the knowledge of Christ, as well as in grace, must be aimed at in this life. So the apostle did, Philip. iii. 12 : he 'followed after, if he might apprehend ;' and all that are sincere are thus minded. He did not apprehend all of Christ, but laboured still in inquiries after him, and took greater strides in his journey to him. Light of knowledge is sown here, but the harvest is above. We can never totally shake off our ignorance, till we surmount our natural corruption.

(4.) The knowledge of God and Christ which is saving, differs not from other knowledge in regard of the object, but the manner of knowing and the effects of knowledge. One knows by a natural understanding, and knows God in the Scripture as he would know a thing written in any other book : the other knowledge is by an understanding opened to take in more fully what is presented. The shutters which barred out the

light are pulled down, whereby the light breaks into the room more clearly : Luke xxiv. 45, 'Then opened he their understandings.' Two may behold the same picture, the object is the same ; but one having a more piercing eye, and exacter judgment, will better discern the lineaments and beauty of the work, which the other cannot perceive, though he views the same object. Suppose a beast that knows his master, and the servants that gave him food, were changed into a man, and endued with a rational soul, he would have the same object of knowledge ; but he would know them in another manner, with an understanding given ; whereas he knew them before only by a customary sight, a strength of imagination. And another kind of knowledge in the effects. A child of a year old may know his parents, his father, mother, and the servants ; but when he grows up, though there be no change of the object, yet there is in the effects of his knowledge. He knows them with more reverence, with more rational affections, with expressions of duty. So the knowledge of God differs in a sound Christian from the knowledge others have under the preaching of the gospel ; he knows God and Christ in a clearer manner, with a spiritual eye, and brings forth affectionate and practical fruits of that knowledge.

2. What this knowledge of God is affirmatively. The world pretends to know God, but Christ flatly denies it, and appeals to his Father for the truth of it in his last prayer : John xvii. 25, 'The world hath not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.' That part of the world that Christ had preached to and declared the message from his Father, knew not God ; they heard the report of him, they could not but know the doctrine delivered, but they rejected it, refused the embracing of it, and therefore it was no knowledge of God. He that hath a true sense of God cannot but love him, trust in him, humble himself before him, hope in him, resign up himself to him, and bless and praise him for his manifestation.

The difference therefore of this knowledge from any other is,

1. In regard of the effects.
2. In regard of the manner of knowing.

1. In regard of the effects.

(1.) It is a transforming knowledge. Such a knowledge which doth necessarily include a conformity to the object. There is an external manifestation of God in the gospel to the ear, an internal manifestation in the heart. The one is called a *report*, the other a *revelation*, Isa. liii. 1. The common privilege of the gospel is to be heard ; the special, to be manifested to the saints by a powerful operation in the heart : Col. i. 26, 27, this 'mystery' is 'made manifest to his saints, to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you the hope of glory.' When Christ is made known *in them* the hope of glory, as well as *to them* ; when the knowledge of God in his grace, and the history of Christ in his nature, offices, and passion, is turned into an image and stamp, working the heart into its own form. Such a manifestation of God spiritually as men have of God naturally : Rom. i. 19, 'That which may be known of God is manifest in them,' as well as shewn to them ; shewed to them in the creatures, manifest in their consciences ; notions of God riveted that cannot be blotted out though resisted by flesh. In the saving knowledge, the notions of God in his gospel discovery, and of Christ in his mediation, are manifest in the heart, insinuating themselves secretly into the inward parts of the soul, and moulding the heart into the form of the evangelical doctrine. Such a revelation of God and Christ in a man as changeth the whole frame and model of counsels and counsellors

which before were followed : Gal. i. 16 : When Christ was revealed in him, he 'conferred not with flesh and blood.' The historical knowledge of Christ is a knowledge of Christ in the purity and misery of his flesh ; the other is a knowledge of Christ in the renewing of his Spirit. The one is a knowledge of the truth *as it is in the doctrine* ; the other a knowledge of the truth *as it is in Jesus*, a transcribing the copy in the heart. The knowledge of the one is like a man's sight of a star, he gazeth upon it, but is not turned into the image and sparkling beauty of that star ; the other is like a man's knowledge of a virtuous person, whose amiable endowments and carriage he admires, and from an admiration proceeds to imitation, and framing himself according to that pattern. When knowledge creates love, love delights to draw the picture of the beloved person.

[1.] This change is the proper end of this knowledge, therefore it cannot be a right knowledge till it doth attain the end. As the end of the Israelites' looking upon the brazen serpent was to be changed from wounded to sound men, from dying to living, the end of the angel's moving the waters in the pool of Bethesda was to enrich them with an healing virtue for the cure of bodily distempers ; the end of this motion was not attained unless some cure were wrought. The forming of Christ in the head, changing the notions in the mind, is in order to a Christ formed in the heart, changing the inclinations of the will and the temper of the soul. A renewing in knowledge is in order to the renewing the image of God : Col. iii. 10, 'Renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created them,' removing the ignorance to remove the deformity. It is expressed by opening the eyes, but with such a virtue lodged by it in the heart that attracts it from the devil to God : Acts xxvi. 18, 'To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.' The motion of the will is the end of light in the understanding. When the eye is opened to behold the truth, the next step is a change of false notions of God and religion to true ; after that, a conversion from Satan the prince of darkness, to God the father of lights ; then follows justification, sanctification, and the completeness of happiness. Not only the beginning of this change, but the progress of it till it arrive to perfection, depends upon our looking on Christ : 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'With open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.' The glory of God and Christ are beheld and known in the glass of the gospel, and a divine beauty conveyed, as was to Moses in his converse with God, by a reflection of his beams, just as the rising sun changeth the air into its own likeness, and transforms the world from the deformity of darkness to the beauty of light, or colours laid upon canvass assimilate it to the object whose picture it is. There is a reflection from the understanding to the will whereby this change is wrought, and it is by look after look that it is perfected to a full resemblance, according to the degrees of spiritual knowledge. When this knowledge is *enlightening*, it is the image of God in the mind ; when it is *enlivening*, it is the image of God in the heart ; a picture of God and Christ, drawn in the understanding, which enamours the will, and assimilates the whole soul to God. The gospel is this glass, which doth not only represent the object, but alters the complexion of the soul. This transformation is the end of the opening the eye, that the object may be viewed, and the heart changed thereby. As human knowledge is insignificant unless it attain the end of knowledge, so is divine, or the knowledge of God. The sublimest knowledge of God, therefore, which centres not in this end, is to no purpose, unless to aggravate our sin and sharpen our misery. This is not gained by a loose knowledge, as a man knows the sun by his beams ;

but he hath not the image of the sun in the ball of his eye unless he look upon the body of it.

[2.] The change of the soul to a perfect glory in heaven depends upon the perfect knowledge of God and Christ; and therefore the change here depends upon this knowledge. This knowledge therefore cannot be a right knowledge without this, which is the proper effect of it. The vision of Christ in his glorious state shall then cause likeness to him: 1 John iii. 2, 'We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' We shall see him in his glory; we shall, by that view, be transformed into the image of his glory, as by contemplating his virtues we are here changed into the image of his grace. The devils and wicked men shall see him in his glory at his appearance, but not be happy by him, because their knowledge of him doth not change their devilish complexion. As it is an uncomfortable knowledge of him then which doth not change the soul into the image of his glory, so it is a miserable knowledge of him here that doth not alter us into the image of his grace. The true knowledge of God works the same effects here, according to its degrees, as it will hereafter. As a perfect sight will draw the clearest and fullest lineaments of God in the heart, so an imperfect knowledge of him here must cause some shadows and imperfect draughts of him in the soul. It is not else a knowledge of the right stamp.

[3.] Such an effect of the knowledge of Christ is therefore necessary. Every notion of God and Christ in the mind must spring up into a new grace in the will, and be as a root of life in the heart; it will else be but as a feather in the cap or flower in the hand, which will make a little show and wither, and leave no prints behind it but those of condemnation. That knowledge of God which is not beautified with grace, instead of making us amiable Christians, will render us deformed devils.

Well, then, consider, do we find grace conformable to our knowledge of God and Christ? Doth the knowledge of God's holiness in Christ render our souls holy? Doth the consideration of his majesty sink us into humility? Doth the thoughts of his condescension lay the soul at his feet? Doth the knowledge of his power subdue our pride, the knowledge of his love transform us into love and affection? Doth grace in our hearts bud forth from the notions of our head? It is then such a knowledge of God as secures our happiness. Do we see Christ in the brightness of his divine nature, and the veil of his human, to admire his condescending kindness? Do we know him travelling to mount Calvary, in the greatness of his strength, to spring up sorrow for our sins? Do we see him wrestling with devils, to pull the prey of precious souls out of his hand, to rest upon his power? Do we know him offering up to the justice of God the full satisfaction of blood, and paying the demanded debt to a farthing, to accept of him as a propitiation? Do we know him wielding a royal sceptre by the will of his Father, to obey his authority? Do we know him pierced, and know him raised? know him on the cross and on the throne? in the reproaches of men and the glory of his Father? to be assimilated to him in the likeness of his death and the quickenings of his resurrection? It is then a living knowledge, such a knowledge as now buds and blossoms, and will ripen up to eternal life.

2. It is an affective knowledge. All saving knowledge is full of sense. The beams of truth in the mind beget a kindly heat in the will. The understanding forms motives of fear and love of God, and offers them to the will to be pursued; the soul desires to know him more, that it may love him. Some, therefore, define divinity to be affective.* All men have some

* Ales.

knowledge of God objectively, but it is not formally a divine knowledge, without the affections of love to him, and delight in him. This saving knowledge is a knowledge of a reality in God and Christ. Another may have clearer notions, know truths in their connections, but a Christian knows with a more excellent knowledge, because more affective, with a heat as well as light. What shines upon the head kindles love in the heart. Others have the same object of knowledge, but it appears not in that amiableness to them; there is a difference between a rational and spiritual knowledge, as there is between the Spirit, the author of the one, and reason, the spring of the other. Natural knowledge lies sleeping in the head, without jogging the affections; spiritual light cannot be without spiritual heat: Luke xxiv. 31, 32, 'Their eyes were opened, and their hearts burned.' The one hath light like that of a torch; the other influence, as well as light, like that of the sun. It is the property of light not only to enlighten, but heat. Some, therefore, make fire to be nothing else but condensed light, and light to be rarefied fire. The true light of God is always accompanied with a flame of love, which clasps about the object. The divine philosopher could say, that souls, first by a view, and then by a love of the divine beauty, recover their wings, and fly up to their heavenly country. Have we, therefore, not only a shine in our heads, but a warmth in our hearts; not only a beam in our minds, but a spark in our affections? It is then a saving knowledge of God. Both must go together; knowledge without affections is stupid, and affections without knowledge are childish. The diviner the light in the mind, the warmer will love be in the soul. The clearer and stronger the beams upon the wall, the stronger will be the reflection. In knowledge, we are passive in the reception of the divine beams; by affection, we are active, and give ourselves to God.

To prove this, consider that,

(1.) All the knowledge we have of God is insignificant to happiness, without suitable affections. God's end is not so much to be known by us, as to be loved by us, and the discovery of himself is in order to a return of affections from us: John xiv. 21, 'He that loves me, shall be loved of my Father;' not he that only knows me. We cannot suppose that in heaven the blessed are enriched with a greater light, but that they may be spirited with a greater love. Love and holiness are the perfection of the soul there, and contemplation but a means to bring in the heart to him. It is more glorious to love than barely to know. Those that distinguish the orders of angels, place the seraphim above the cherubim, because they have a more ardent love, as well as the clearer knowledge. If we want love to others, the apostle accounts us ignorant of God, because God is love: 1 John iv. 8, 'He that loves not, knows not God, for God is love.' Much more is he ignorant of God, that is empty of affection to him, who is more amiable than any creature. It is one thing to know God, and another to retain God in our knowledge. One may be said to know God, who can discourse rationally of God, as those philosophers could, Rom. i. 28; but they retain God in their knowledge, that are inflamed with affection to him, and scorn all things in comparison of him. Though we may seem to have a clear knowledge, it cannot be thriving without this, not continuing; when anything is loved equally with him, there may soon be a forsaking of him. All the knowledge a natural man hath of God, is such a sight of the excellency of God and Christ, and his truths, as a beast hath of a diamond; he seeth it sparkling, but knows not its real worth, and therefore hath no satisfaction in it, nor affection to it.

[1.] Since this knowledge is transforming, it cannot be so without affection.

Without knowledge of him, we can never affect him; and without affections, we can never be like him. We are not changed into his image till we behold his beauty so as to love and adore him. It is not only a beam of his loveliness, but a ray of his love, that changeth the temper of the soul. Though the light of the fire attends the heat of it,* yet it is not the light, but the heat, transforms combustible matter into fire. It was not Christ's knowledge of us, but love to us, stooped the divine nature to assume ours; nor our knowledge, but faith and love, that elevates us to the divine. As Christ is a Sun of righteousness, not only shining, but warming, if we be like him, there must not only be light in our minds, but warmth in our affections.

[2.] It could be no better than the knowledge of a devil. If we had as high a knowledge of God as an angel hath, without affections suitable to the angelical state, it would be our torment, not our happiness. This saving knowledge differs from the other, as the knowledge of angels doth from that of devils. The light in their minds hath sprung out into a constant affection ever since their creation, and could never see a spark in anything else to draw them to any dislike of God. The devils have a knowledge of God, but are as much empty of affection to him as the angels are of any hatred of him. The knowledge of the good angels would be their torment, as well as the knowledge of the devils, if they had not flames of love, as well as beams of light. That only is true knowledge that acts us to a conjunction with God.

[3.] The knowledge of any object is to little purpose without a suitable affection. As a man hath not a right knowledge of sin, unless he feel the dreadful weight of it, so as to loathe it,—Ezek. xxxvi. 31, 'Then shall you remember your own evil ways, and shall loathe yourselves for your iniquity';—nor a right knowledge of the word, unless he doth believe it; nor a right apprehension of the world unless he counts it contemptible; so no man knows God aright unless his heart be set upon him, according to the worth of the object known, and the savour of the ointments of Christ. It is impossible a man can have an intellectual spiritual view of God, but he must see him amiable and worthy of his choicest affections; and he cannot be so injurious to himself and his own sentiments, as not to give his own apprehensions their due by giving God's amiableness his. He cannot be said, therefore, to have any sound apprehension of God, who hath not a choice affection to him, and delight in him. He that doth not praise the skill of an artist in his workmanship, discovers either his ignorance or his envy. As a faith without works hath no better a title from the apostle than a dead faith, James ii. 20, so a knowledge without love is no better than a dead, stupid knowledge, a knowledge buried in the grave of earthly affections. No man can be so stripped of affection to himself, as to neglect that good which he doth really know. No man can imagine that another apprehends that as excellent, with which there is not a full closure of his affections. If Moses had not slighted the treasures of Egypt for the reproach of Christ, he had not testified any true knowledge and esteem of him, Heb. xi. 26.

Well, then, can that man be said to know God to be clothed with majesty, before whom angels cover their faces, and mountains tremble, who hath no fear to offend him? Doth he know God to be a consuming fire, and himself but stubble, that hath no dread of God? Doth he know the mercy of God, who hath no care to please him, but presumes upon his goodness? Can he

* Fatal Doom, or Charms of Divine Love, p 9, changed.

be said to know God's holiness, that hath no sense of his own uncleanness? Doth that man know Christ to be a blessed Redeemer, who doth not fall at his feet? Doth he know him groaning upon the cross for sin, and bruised for it, who lets that sin live with welcome in his soul, which grieved and bruised him? If knowledge in the head doth not work spiritual affections in the heart, it can never be put upon the account of a saving knowledge; it is not really knowledge, but only a pretence to it.

(2.) Without affection, we answer not the end of the knowledge of God. The revelation of God is made to us for our imitation, he is discovered as the chiefest good and the exactest pattern. The sum of the law consists in love, and the end of the gospel manifestation is to engage our love. Christ is not represented only as a dying man, but as God-man dying for the sins of the world, suffering in our stead, and therefore to raise our affections, not to content our curiosity. Faith and love must join hands, 1 Tim. i. 14. The gospel, which is a representation of God in Christ, is said to be worthy, not of observation, but of acceptance, ver. 15, and worthy of observation in order to acceptance. The knowledge of a law is to raise a love to it, Ps. cxix. 97; the knowledge of the law-giver ought not to do less. As we know not righteousness till the law be in our hearts,—Isa. li. 7, 'Ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law,'—so we know not God till he be in our affections.

(3.) Our knowledge of God ought to be conformable to his knowledge of us. God's knowledge of his people is attended with affection. He is not said in Scripture language to know, unless he love: Amos iii. 2, 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth.' There is a great difference between God's knowledge of omniscience, and his knowledge of affection. With the first he knows all creatures, with the other his people. As God is not said to know us without testimonies of his affection to us, so we cannot be said to know God without leaps of our affections to him.

(4.) Application of ourselves to the knowledge of God without affection is not agreeable to the nature of our souls. The choice of the will in all true knowledge treads upon the heel of the act of the understanding, and men naturally desire the knowledge of that which is true, in order to the enjoyment of that which is good in it. The end of all the acts of the understanding is to cause a motion in the will and affections suitable to the apprehension. God hath given us two faculties: understanding, to know the goodness of a thing, and a will to embrace it. To content one faculty in contemplation, without contenting the other in embracing what we know, is to give a half satisfaction to the soul; it is to separate those two faculties of understanding and will, which God hath joined. Knowledge is the glory of the mind both in this and the other world, the object of that is truth; but there is another faculty which must have its perfection, that is, the will, the object whereof is good; and the content of that faculty lies in embracing the good apprehended both in this life and the next. This, therefore, must be gratified as well as the other, and each faculty must have a full rest in a due object; the soul else cannot have an entire satisfaction according to the latitude and capaciousness of its nature. Therefore all abstracted notions of God, without an influence upon the will, are barren, and not agreeable and satisfactory to the nature of the soul. It cannot be satisfied with contemplation without fruition, and such an intimate fruition as may affect the whole nature. Now, to have this enjoyment is not only to know God or think of him, but to embrace him by love, to clasp about God with spiritual affections, to receive the touches of his goodness every moment. To give the soul a full satisfaction according to the nature of it, is to have a stamp

of the nature of God upon our understanding, and a stamp of the goodness of God upon our wills.

(5.) Without affection, our knowledge of God may have, and will have, base and corrupt ends. And therefore our knowledge cannot be saving without it. Men may desire to know, out of a natural itch, the relics of Adam, or out of a desire to enlarge the perfection of their understanding (as the knowledge of philosophers did tend chiefly to such an end), and may have no higher aims in endeavouring after the knowledge of God than endeavouring after the knowledge of other things, either natural or moral. Perhaps this affecting the knowledge of God may arise from pride and ambition; and a desire of being esteemed eminent in intellectuals and discourse may make the pulse of their affections beat strongly to this knowledge, it being natural to men to be displeased more with being counted fools than being counted vicious, and to have more natural desires after knowledge than after virtue, even as Adam had. Nay, men may desire to know God and the truths of God as a stirrup to some lust, and to foment some carnal design, as gain, which may be promoted by religious discourses. But certainly much of the knowledge of God which is pretended among us, though it may arise out of an affection to knowledge, yet may be without an affection to the object of it. As there is a knowledge of God when there is not a 'glorifying of him as God,' Rom. i. 21, so there may be a desire to know God without any desire to glorify him. As a man may desire to know sin, to see a man when he is drunk and to observe his carriage, not out of any design he hath to loathe that sin, but to make his observations upon the carriage and disposition of the person while he is under the power of that filthy act, which is but to satisfy his curiosity; or he may desire to see a man in the exercise of some virtue out of the same end, not out of a desire to conform himself to that pattern; so a man may desire to know God, and Christ, and the truths of Christ, not with any intent to have his affections with an exact harmony centre in them, but to satisfy that natural thirst which he hath for knowledge. And a man may have a great delight in this knowledge of God, as Isa. lviii. 2, they did 'delight to know God's ways,' and 'delight in approaching' to him, but (as their fasts were, ver. 4) 'for strife and debate.' And that delight may arise from a delight in the excellency of the object, as a man delights to contemplate the nature of the sun and stars more than the nature of a clod of earth, yet cannot be said to love them, but loves his own act of contemplation and knowledge of them. Many thus know God, and are inquisitive after the knowledge of him, as a curious object of knowledge, not as a spiritual object of love and delight to bestow the flower of their affections upon. Such often miss of their intent; God obscures himself when he is searched after with such curiosity. And such a knowledge will end in apostasy, as it began in corruption; the man will return as a dog to lick up his vomit, or a swine to wallow in the mire, as those did who had escaped the pollutions of the world 'through the knowledge of Christ,' 2 Peter ii. 20-22; which knowledge they did probably affect out of curiosity, because of the novelty of it, the noise it made in the world, or some by-end, which made them cast it off when it ceased to serve their purpose, and so at last count Christ and his cross foolishness.

Well, then,

Try your knowledge of God by your affections to him. What strong desires are there for the enjoyment of God and Christ; what delight in approaches to him; what propensities of the heart in spiritual duties? Do they spring from affection, or move by the fears and jerks of conscience? Doth the knowledge of Christ in his mediation, natures, offices, as the only

remedy for our lost souls, kindle desires, holy affections, unexpressible heart-breakings for him, as we find David's heart often flying up upon this wing? Is there a love to God rising out of a sense of his love to lost man? God cannot be known as an infinite, and unbounded, and outflowing goodness without a flight of our affections to him. It is as impossible that a good spiritually known should not be beloved, as that any good should be beloved that is not known. Every common witness of God in the works of creation 'fills the heart with gladness,' Acts xiv. 16, 17, much more every spiritual witness of God in the work of redemption apprehended by the soul. If created excellency insinuates itself into our affections, the supereminent beauty of God must much more when he is seen and known. The spiritual light which comes from God is for God. In other knowledge, self-love poiseth the heart, but a saving knowledge conducts the heart to an admiration of God and affection to him. In heaven, a clear vision renders the beholder full of the most glowing affections. The angels 'always behold the face of God,' Mat. xviii. 10. *Always*, as not counting anything else worthy of a glance, but in obedience to his order. Nothing can be called a saving knowledge of God which doth not rank all our affections in order to the object of it.

3. It is an active and expressive knowledge; it expresseth in the life what is in the head and heart. A change in the heart engenders affection, and affection will break out in action; love will lay a constraint upon the heart. We commonly say of a notoriously profane man, though he may have excellent parts, and a great stock of knowledge, that he is a sot; because his knowledge is not operative in ways agreeable to it, he acts like the most ignorant person. He cannot be said to know God to be holy, and the gospel to be a doctrine according to godliness, who hath not a practice according to the rules of godliness. To be sensual, is to have nothing of the Spirit: Jude 19, he hath nothing of the light of the Spirit who is under the conduct of a corrupted sense. And the apostle intimates it plainly, that unless men 'awake to righteousness' and avoid sin, they 'have not the knowledge of God,' 1 Cor. xv. 34. A bedrid knowledge it is, without affection proper for it, rather the torment than ornament of the soul. All knowledge, without an imitation of God, is but a stupid, sleepy notion. We have then a full assurance of knowledge, when we are followers of God, 1 Thes. i. 5, 6. The first principle which is taught by the manifestation of God is to deny ungodliness: Titus ii. 12, 13, 'The grace of God teacheth us to deny ungodliness.' As God's knowing us is not a simple view, but a provident care, so our knowledge of God is not a simple speculation, but a divine operation of the soul, as well as in the soul. If 'he that commits sin hath not known God,' 1 John iii. 6, then he that hath known God doth not commit sin. He flatters not himself in any, arms himself against all, commenceth an irreconcilable war against the lighter troops as well as the main body, and stands upon his guard to prevent every invasion. He that knows Christ, knows that he is worthy of all his service, since he, and none but he, was crucified for him. He that knows God, knows the necessity of enjoying him, and will therefore be guided in those ways which tend to the enjoyment of him. If a man knows a medicine to be excellent for the cure of such a disease which he labours under, and is sensible of the necessity of it, he will certainly apply it. As Christ discovered the knowledge of God in the world, to dissolve the works of the devil in the world; so when the knowledge of Christ shines in the heart, it dissolves the works of darkness and lust in the soul, for it discovers right notions of sin and vanity, and he

that hath right notions of it cannot affect it. When Noah knew God in his threatening justice, he obeys God in the building an ark. When Abraham knew God in the mercy and truth of his promise, he obeys God in offering his Isaac. The one's knowledge wrought against the reproaches of an unbelieving world, and the other's against the tide of a natural affection: so powerful is this divine knowledge, where it seizeth upon the heart, to bring forth the fruits of fear and holiness. Let none of us therefore flatter ourselves that we have a saving knowledge of God without imitation of him, that we understand Christ to be a sufficient Saviour without relying on him. It is a knowledge in the form, and an ignorance in the power. Without an evangelical obedience, a professing Christian knows no more savingly than a moral heathen, because he acts no better than such an one.

(1.) This knowledge is life. It is 'the light of life,' John viii. 12; an active, lively light, by an Hebraism. All lucid bodies in the heavens are active in their own nature, and direct men in their several spheres of activity in the world. When the sun riseth, men rise to their daily task; when the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines forth in the face of Christ in the heart, there is a resurrection to vital actions. It is 'a well-spring of life unto him that hath it,' Prov. xvi. 22. If it hath a vitality in it to convey life, it must needs rise up in excellent operations, according to the measure of it, unless that we can suppose that a divine principle in the mind should produce nothing else but a dead sleep in all the other parts of the soul. Life it is, and life is not without activity; eternal life it is, and that cannot be without a succession of vital acts to eternity.

(2.) The end of knowledge is not attained without actions suitable to it. If we have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, there is a stripping off the rags of the old Adam, a change of 'the former conversation which was according to deceitful lusts,' Eph. iv. 21, 22; 'but you have not so learned Christ,' &c. As the word is an engrafted word, so the knowledge of God is an engrafted knowledge, which is inserted in the stock, to change the nature of it into that of the graft, and causing the production of fruits from it according to the nature of the slip joined with it. The Scripture, which is a discovery of God, is not only a history but a rule. God declares himself as our Lord and as our pattern; Christ is manifested as an image of conformity as well as a propitiatory offering. Where he is known as a propitiation for our comfort, he is known as a pattern for our practice. The end of knowledge is to impress a sound image of the goodness of an object as well as the truth; the truth to be eyed, and the goodness to be imitated. Distinct conceptions of God, and rational discourses of Christ,* glorify him no more than a painter doth the party whose picture he hath drawn. The glory of God consists not in a lifeless notion of him, but an active resemblance of him. A natural man may have some pleasure in knowing the nature of God, but he cares not for knowing the ways of God: Job xxi. 14, 'We desire not the knowledge of thy ways;' he would know him to be merciful, but not know him to be holy. He is opposite to the truths of God, because they are repugnant to the delights and interests of the flesh. The Scotists defined divinity well when they made it *practica*; better than Aquinas, who made it *speculativa*. Every illumination of the mind is not to speculate, but to work by; every notion of God is a direction to some sphere of action. The end of Christ's knowledge of his Father must be the end of our knowledge, both of God and himself. He knows his Father's secrets to reveal them, and he knows his Father's will to perform it. As we are to pray that we may do the will of God as the angels do, so we are to know, that we may

* Jackson, vol. iii. quar. cap. viii. p. 129.

do the will of God as the angels do it. The incarnation of Christ was for action; the divine nature had not attained its end in the business of our redemption, without union to the human, as necessary to mediatory acts; nor doth our knowledge of God attain its end without union to the will, as necessary to all religious operations. The knowledge of Christ is like the former prophecies of Christ, which would not have had their effect without his incarnation; nor hath knowledge its effect without (so to speak) an incarnation of it in our conversation. The end of knowledge is directive; the proper effect of knowledge is the observation of the direction, to write after the copy, to work according to the pattern, to do what is agreeable to the perfections of God, to honour what we see honourable in God, and to disparage none of those excellencies we profess to know.

(3.) All the knowledge of God and Christ, without action corresponding thereunto, is no better in the account of God than ignorance, unless it be accidentally to condemnation. Without obedience, we are truly ignorant, though our speculations may be as sublime as those of devils: 1 John ii. 4, 'He that saith, he knows him, and keeps not his commandments, is a liar.' The true knowledge of God doth not only glitter in the understanding, or glimmer in a profession, but beams out in a vigorous conversation, acting all things agreeable to the will of God. That knowledge of God which doth not take root in the heart, and grow up into life and spirit, is ignorance in the account of God. Those Gentiles, Rom. i. 21, that are said to know God, are, ver. 28, said not to know him; they knew him as rational men, not as obedient men; they had a notion of him, without any affection to his service; they had high speculations of his excellency, but nothing of his perfections and his law writ in the tables of their hearts: such a knowledge as geometicians may have by understanding the rules of a science, not such a knowledge as an artificer may have by the practice of those rules. No doubt but Eli's sons had a knowledge of God and his law by education, but because it did not slide into their conversation, they are said not to know the Lord, 1 Sam. ii. 12. Not to know God, and not to obey him, are one and the same thing in the account of God at the day of judgment, 2 Thes. i. 8; and it is called ignorance, because men with that knowledge act as if they were wholly ignorant of the nature and will of God. They behave themselves as men that never heard of God or Christ would be expected to do. They may be Christians in knowledge, and pagans in life. True reason in everything doth naturally tend to practice. He is of no use in a society or commonwealth who is swallowed up in contemplations, and launcheth not out into a useful activity. An idle knowledge is of no use for God, and the end of a man's creation; it is but a pretence, a mere puff of a fleshly mind. There is as much difference between such a dormant knowledge, and that which riseth up in sprightly motions for God, as between the sun in a statue bravely gilded, and that in the firmament dispersing his influences into all the corners of the world, and honouring his Creator by his daily race. We no more know any truth of God, unless we digest it, than a man knows the virtue of bread, unless he concocts it, and feels the strength of it in his limbs. Practice is the evidence of knowledge; it cannot be rationally concluded that he knows God to be omnipresent, who neglects the duty in secret required of him, or apprehends him to be just, who in a course of sin denies it, and presumes upon his mercy. God puts an emphasis upon Josiah's obedience, as an evidence of his knowledge: Jer. xxii. 16, 'He judged the cause of the poor and needy; was not this to know me? saith the Lord.' More than ever God said of Solomon, who had his brain better filled, and his heart more empty. Solomon could discourse excellently of the nature of

God, and ravish men with his wisdom ; but God never said of that, ' Was not this to know me ? ' Other knowledge may make us admired among men ; this only makes us acceptable to God.

(4.) The least saving knowledge of God is of an active nature. The wise men had but a spark by the discovery of a star, and that put them upon seeking the King of the Jews, Mat. ii. 1, 2 ; the least star in the heavens, though it hath not so much light as another, has its influences and regular motions. Another may discourse better of the nature of God, speak distinctly of the glory of his attributes and works, discourse of the nature of sin, give an hundred reasons against it, yet obey not that God he speaks of, and be a slave to that sin he disputes against ; whereas he that hath the least spark of the spiritual knowledge of God and Christ, walks more according to the nature of God, and demeans himself with more honour to the perfections of God in his life, than the greatest discourser of him can with his tongue. He is continually inquiring what purity, fear, love, dependence, obedience, grief and joy, the holiness, majesty, goodness, mercy, faithfulness, power, and righteousness of God, calls for at his hands. Such an one hath a martyrdom knowledge ; is content to part with anything, with all, for the glory of that God he knows : the other, that hath a flourishing wit, a loose, unrooted, floating knowledge, would not part with the least drop of blood in his body for the honour of that God he pretends to know ; he would cast all the knowledge of God and Christ at his heels, rather than part with anything for him, when Christ and his life come to a contest. But the least grain of the saving knowledge of God renders a man an habitual martyr.

Well, then, try your knowledge of God by this. As sin is not known unless it cause grief in the heart, so God is not known unless the knowledge of him quicken an obedience to him. Where this spiritual knowledge of God is implanted, and the sweetness of Christ experimented, there will be a delight in those services which are well pleasing to him ; a joy in all motives to him, and a swiftness in all motions for him ; a delight, both in the service itself, and the object of it.

4. It is an humbling, self-abasing knowledge.

(1.) It humbleth us before God. To know God without knowing ourselves, is a fruitless speculation.* The knowledge of ourselves and our own misery, without the knowledge of God and his mercy, is a miserable vexation. The end of it is to pay God a glory due to him from his creature. Pride debaseth the Deity, and snatcheth the crown of glory from God to set it upon the creature's head ; but this saving knowledge sinks man to the dust without sinking him to hell ; lays him flat on the earth, thereby to raise him to heaven. True knowledge, and a melting heart, are inseparable companions ; Christ joins hardness and ignorance together, Mark viii. 17. It is the nature of other knowledge to puff up, 1 Cor. viii. 1 ; of this, to pull down. The plumes of a proud spirit fall at the appearance of God. He regards himself as a worm, when he understands the excellency of his Creator. Without it, it is but a knowledge in conceit, not in reality ; he knows nothing of God, though he thinks he doth, 1 Cor. viii. 2. Manasseh had some knowledge of God, no question, by the religious education of his father Hezekiah ; but it went not for current coin in heaven till he was in an humbled frame : 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13, ' Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God.' It is not a knowledge of God till it make a man shrink into a sense of his own baseness and nothingness. A bare dogmatical knowledge of God advanceth man without a proportionable advancement of God. It is of the same nature with other knowledge ; that which comes from our

* Dr Preston.

own reason is our fondling, it brings forth the fruits of old Adam ; that which is dropped in by the Spirit brings forth the fruits of the Spirit, renders a man sensibly obliged, not to his own wit, but God's grace. A rational revelation rather hardens the heart than melts it ;* as a rational conviction is light without heat. Other knowledge discovers other things, but not a man's self ; like a dark lantern, which shews us other persons and things, but obscures ourselves from the sight of ourselves ; but the knowledge of God is such a light whereby a man beholds himself, as well as the way wherein he is to walk.

[1.] It is such a knowledge as scatters the mist that is upon the heart, and thereby discovers its filth. The first beam shot into the heart by the Spirit darts to the very centre, and discovers the nest of filth and poison. As the beam is shot from God, it reveals his beauty ; as shedding its light upon the soul, it reveals its deformity. As the beam from the sun, that conquers the darkness of the night, discovers the glory of the sun, and the filth of a dunghill at the same time. The sensible discovery of the holiness of God, and the sufferings of Christ, in the very act, opens the sinfulness of sin. The majesty of God shews him his vileness, the purity of God his filthiness, the justice of God his demerit, and the power of God his impotence. If the soul knows God in his glory, it sinks down, with Isaiah, at the very first ray of it, in a sense of its undone condition : Isa. vi. 1, 5, 'Woe is me, for I am undone !' נִרְבִּיתִי ; I was silent, (Symm.), ἐσιώπησα, as if he had attempted to join with the angels in the praise of God at the sight of him, but was struck down with a sense of his own unworthiness. 'I am a man of polluted lips,' *i.e.* I am not worthy to praise God ; so powerful was one ray to affect his whole soul with a sense of his sin, and his miserable estate by it, and stripped him of all conceits of self-worth.† When the soul hears God in the law, it trembles at the thunder. When it sees Christ bowing upon the cross, it cannot but bow down under a sense of that iniquity which caused it. To know Christ savingly, in the first glance, is to know ourselves to be children of wrath, under the curse of the law, and liable to the justice of God. To know Christ as mediator, implies our distance from God ; to know him as reconciler, our enmity ; to know him as redeemer, our slavery ; to know him as a prophet, our ignorance ; as a priest, our guilt and weakness ; as an advocate, our inability to manage our own cause. Every notion of Christ is a light that opens our eyes to advance faith in God, and humility in ourselves. Every rule is *index sui et obliqui*, it shews its own straightness, and the crookedness of anything applied to it. All the glory of the stars, as well as the darkness of the night, disappears at the rising of the sun. At the shedding of this beam upon the heart, the natural glory of a man's own righteousness is obscured, as well as his guilt and loathsomeness manifested. When the elders saw God in his glory, they fell upon their faces, Rev. iv. 10. When John Baptist saw Christ, he was sensible of his own filthiness, and need of washing : Matt. iii. 14, 'I have need to be baptized of thee ;' an expression not used before by him to any of the multitude. How is a soul, at the first breaking out of this light upon him, humbled at the consideration of his unworthy thoughts of God, unsuitable to the notions he is now possessed with ! How doth he distaste his own temper, to be so little affected with a God so transcendently worthy of his highest love ! O my soul, why wert thou so base, so vile in thy apprehensions and pursuits, as to cast thyself down to adore such despicable objects as sin and vanity !

(2.) It is a knowledge that comes from God, and therefore must needs

* Strong.

† Grot.

humble. It is a beam from him ; it is not therefore to nourish that pride in the creature which he punished 'upon the fall with so long a chain of miseries. It is he 'teacheth the meek his way,' Ps. xxv. 9. He makes sinners meek by his teaching ; and when they are meek, they are subjects capable of more knowledge and instructions from him. If the meek are the subjects of clearer teachings, the effect of this discovery is not to exalt their pride, but enlarge their humility. Pride cannot naturally flow from anything that is divine. It is none of God's offspring, but the devil's brat. God, who hath set us a pattern of humility in his own condescensions, and set us an example of humility in the person of his Son, can never be the Father of that which is so contrary to all his designs in the world. Pride is the devil's fly-blow in the soul.

(3.) The knowledge of God is always attended with a comparison of the soul with him, if it be saving. There cannot but be some reflection. The angels, in their knowledge of Christ as their confirmer, cannot but reflect with humility upon their mutable state by nature, which might have rendered them by their own folly as sinful and miserable as devils, without the grace of God, and their confirmation in a happy state by the Son of God. So in the knowledge of God's excellency, the soul cannot but reflect upon its unsuitableness to God. It sees God, and falls out with itself. It loves God, and is angry with itself. It beholds God, and looks upon itself with disdain. Peter could not receive a look from his master without reflecting upon his unworthy carriage, and melting into tears. When a man looks upon the earth, and the things upon it, he is apt to believe he hath an acute eye ; but when he looks upon the sun, and finds himself confounded by the brightness of its light, he is sensible of the dulness of his eye in comparison of that lustre which glared upon it. So when we fix our eyes upon ourselves, and dwell upon the thoughts of any excellency, righteousness, or virtue in us, we turn self-flatterers, and are apt to imagine that we are some great thing, above the sphere of common nature, and the insects of mankind ; but when we turn our eyes towards heaven, and take a prospect of the holiness, wisdom, righteousness of God, which ought to be our copy to write after, our pride is dashed out of countenance, our holiness appears sordid, our righteousness matter of shame, our virtue feeble, our wisdom folly, our actions madness, and all our excellency a mere senseless shadow. We are then humbled, not only for our sins, but our services, when we find those duties we are apt to boast of bear no proportion to the holiness of God. When Paul knew Christ, he was not only humble in himself, but rejected all confidence in the religious props he rested on before, Philip. iii. 8. He then beheld himself a dead man, and his services dead services, when he understood the righteousness of God manifested in a crucified and raised Christ. One spark of the divinity of Christ in a miracle brought Peter upon his knees with a self-reflection : 'Lord, depart from me, for I am a sinful man,' Luke v. 8. It will make men humble for the sin of others. If we know God spiritually to be great, excellent, holy, we cannot but with grief behold the sons of men so careless of his honour, and travailing with a birth of perpetual injuries against so excellent a majesty ; when we compare his nature with their practices, and reflect how little he hath deserved such carriages, and how much he hath deserved the contrary. The angels having the most glittering heads have also the most affectionate hearts to the glory of that majesty which they adore, and therefore they rejoice at the conversion of a sinner ; by the same reason they have, if not their grief, yet their indignation at the abuses God suffers in the world by wicked men, when they make this judicious comparison.

(4.) The more knowledge any ever had of God, the more humble they

have been. When Peter grew in the apprehensions of the ends of the death of Christ, he had no more those aspiring thoughts to think himself fit to reprove his master, as when he had the first revelation of him to be the Son of God, Mark viii. 29, 32, Mat. xvi. 13. Young scholars are most proud. Duarenus* used to say, Those that come to the university the first year are doctors in their own conceits, the second year licentiates, and the third year students and learners. Not an apostle outstripped Paul in the knowledge of God and Christ, nor came up to an equal measure with him; nor did any equal him in his humility, who sets himself upon record to the world as the least of saints, and the chiefest of sinners. Christ, who lay in the bosom of his Father, became a worm rather than a man, in making himself of no reputation, Philip. ii. 7. In conformity to him, the more clear the revelations of God are to our souls, the more voluntary disannulments there are of ourselves. The angels that have the nearest approach to the deity, and the richest prospect of his glory, cover their faces with an awe of his majesty, as if they did acknowledge the imperfection of their understandings, that they are not more knowing; and cover their feet too, which are the affections of spiritual beings, as if they were ashamed that their love, delight, and zeal were not more glowing. A great stock of natural knowledge debaseth a man in his own eyes, because he apprehends his own weakness to get to the top of that mountain he would reach by his inquiries. Socrates, who was the most knowing man of his age, was sensible that he knew nothing, because the more a man knows, the more he finds his own ignorance, and his inability to shake it off; and that the things he is ignorant of are more than those which he seems to grasp in his understanding. Much more doth a spiritual Christian see, that what he knows of God and Christ is inconceivably less than what he is ignorant of. The more he knows those objects, the more he knows his own defects, and his want of conformity to them. Agur was one of the wisest men of his age, whether he was Solomon, or some other in the time of Solomon (which is more probable), yet counts himself void of wisdom, 'more brutish than any man,' and not having the understanding of a man; as if he were not so wise and knowing as the vulgar sort, as well as inferior to the more raised sort of mankind, as the words *כֵּרֵךְ עֲשִׂימָה* signify, Prov. xxx. 2, 3; and he speaks it in reference to the knowledge he had of God, as appears by verse 4. The more any man sees of God, the lower he falls in his own eyes.

As this knowledge of God makes us more humble before God, so it makes us more humble and meek to men. This was promised as a fruit of the knowledge of God in the gospel. It was this should turn ravenous wolves into gentle lambs, and render their natures as meek as before they were cruel: Isa. xi. 6-9, 'The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the cow and the bear shall feed together, their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord.' It is such a knowledge as quells the pride of man, and the injustice and oppressions and furies engendered by that fruitful principle. The names whereby they are denominated are names of meekness, lambs, kids, calves. Cruelty should grow mild, and inflexible tempers melt; ravenous dispositions be laid aside; the nature of man towards God, and the nature of man towards his neighbour, be changed. The knowledge of Christ in the gospel pulls up such base affections by the roots, which would else grow in an ignorant, untilled heart, as weeds in an unmanured field. If men, therefore, are ready to fall foul upon one another upon every occasion, they have not advanced many steps in the knowledge of God. For

* Walæus de Sabbat. Orat. in fine ii. p. 225.

this temper of humility is one effect of this divine light, it being rendered by the prophet as the cause of such a miraculous change. Where there is not, therefore, such a visible effect, there is nothing of the cause. The knowledge of the Lord can no more be in the soul without humility, than the sun can be in the heavens without dispersing its light on the earth, nor the enlightening Spirit without meekness a fruit of it, Gal. v. 22. Wisdom 'changeth the boldness of the face,' Eccles. viii. 1, and spreads a modesty in the soul; he is thereby less apt to censure others, and more sparing in his judging his brother. God hath a perfect knowledge of himself, and is the highest pattern of humility: 'He humbles himself to behold the things done in heaven and in earth,' Ps. cxiii. 6; much more is it his humiliation to solicit sinners, to bear patiently their affronts. None knew the Father but the Son, who humbled himself to the flesh of man, and to death for him. The angels also that excel in knowledge, as standing before the face of God, excel also in condescending ministries to men, who are more above the greatest man in the dignity of their nature, than the greatest man upon the earth can be above the meanest person by his education and dignity.

Well then, if this be an humbling knowledge, let us try ourselves by it, whether we are arrived to it or no. He that hath not a melting heart hath not been under the shinings of this sun. The darkness of pride will be scattered by the strength and vigour of this light. The saving knowledge of God and Christ crucified lays a man flat on the ground; and the knowledge of God reconciled, and Christ risen, doth both humble and revive. A proud divine knowledge is as great a contradiction as to say, an humble diabolical malice.

5. It is a weaning knowledge. It weans a man's heart from all things below. Clear manifestations of God elevate the soul to God, when ignorance of him depresseth the heart to one creature or other. The excellency of God dims the beauty of the creature, and the true knowledge of this excellency sets the creature below God in the heart. It leaves no room for anything else, as the eye that hath gazed upon the sun admits not presently any other image into it. This divine knowledge disparageth the value of anything else, it represents sin vile, and the world empty. It is such an inestimable treasure, that it is not to be put in the balance with anything else. All other things which carnal men esteem are but thin and airy notions to this knowledge; everything that hath a tincture of flesh and blood, human principles, fleshly counsels, expire when this wisdom shines in upon the soul: Gal. i. 16, 'I consulted not with flesh and blood;' nor can any man that hath found this mine of gold leave it for a mite of brass. When Christ and his sweetness is discerned and tasted, life is a torment, death a pleasure. Simeon upon his sight of Christ desires to depart, since his 'eyes had seen God's salvation,' Luke ii. 29, 30; nothing in the world could be worth his desires after a sight of the Redeemer. And Paul, who both had and valued the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, esteems everything in the world no better than dung, and longs to be dissolved, that he might be in his arms, Philip. iii. 8, and i. 23. As when the sun appears in the heavens, it doth not only discover itself, but discloseth all things on the earth; so when God manifests himself to the soul, he doth not only give the knowledge of himself, but shews to us the true nature of other things, that they can bear no proportion to the excellency of God and Christ, and bestows such a judgment and understanding upon us, that we look upon things under other notions and considerations than before we did; as men have other apprehensions of things in the light than they had in the darkness of the night. He doth not know God, that doth not apprehend him to be more excellent than the withering

flowers of any creature whatsoever ; as he doth not love Christ that loves him not above all creatures ; and he doth not worship God who worships the creature equal with him,—Rom. i. 25, *παρὰ κρίσαντα*, worshipped the creature, *juxta creatorem*,—so he doth not know God that knows him not to be excellent above all creatures, and esteem him accordingly.

6. It is a fiducial knowledge, a knowledge of faith : Ps. ix. 10, ‘ They that know thy name will trust in thee.’ Faith and trust are the concomitants of this knowledge. Such will address to God in all their straits, and rely upon his truth and goodness. And the spirit of wisdom is joined with the acknowledgment of Christ, Eph. i. 17. Faith is principally meant by knowledge in Scripture ; some therefore interpret the knowledge of Christ, which is eternal life in the text, to be faith. No knowledge, indeed, without faith can be eternal life, or the next way to it ; and by knowledge (Isa. liii. 11, ‘ By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many’) must be understood a believing knowledge, and cannot be understood otherwise. All that have a general knowledge of Christ, though never so high, are not justified, for that excellent state the Scripture ascribes only to faith. His knowledge, objectively, the knowledge of him, faith in him ; and faith is called knowledge, because it is radically in the understanding, as liberty is, but it is formally in the will. Not that the understanding is the proper and sole seat of faith, because faith is *fiducia*, trust or reliance, which is not an act of the mind, but of the will. But faith is in the understanding in regard of disposition, but in the will in regard of the fiducial apprehension ;* for faith is not one simple virtue, but compounded of two, knowledge and trust. The common subject is the heart, the special seat of each part is the understanding and will (yet those two parts cannot be separated but the nature of faith is destroyed), as original righteousness was both in the mind and the will ; and the happiness of heaven, which is but one entire happiness, consists both in the acts of the understanding in contemplation, and the acts of the will in the embracing the contemplated object ; but by knowledge or sight in Scripture is principally meant faith. Abraham *saw* the day of Christ, John viii. 56, and with such a sight as sprung up in joy ; he saw it in the promise ; he knew it by way of energy in the propitiation of Christ, and virtue of his Spirit ; he had the power of Christ’s death in the mortification of his unbelief, before the death was felt by the Son of God upon the cross, and rose to a new life by the virtue of Christ’s resurrection, before Christ laid his head in the grave. It was certainly a sight of faith ; for the Jews, to whom Christ spake this, saw him with their bodily eyes, beheld his day, they saw him personally face to face, and knew him in the flesh, yet were wholly ignorant both of the excellency of his person and virtue of his offices. It is one thing to know the nature of God, and another thing to know God in covenant as our God. Of the Sidonians God said, ‘ They shall know that I am the Lord,’ Ezek. xxviii. 22. In a way of justice, they shall know that I am of a righteous nature. But of his people Israel he saith, ‘ They shall know that I am the Lord their God,’ ver. 26 ; a God in covenant with them, in whom they have an interest. It is an interested knowledge ; a relying upon God in his covenant as theirs, according as the Scripture propounds him. There is as great a difference between the common knowledge of God in an unbelieving scholar and a believing Christian, as between the knowledge that a gardener hath of plants and flowers in his master’s garden : he knows how to dress them, knows the names and the nature of every particular plant and flower there ; but though the knowledge of the owner of it doth not extend to all those particularities, yet he knows it to be his, conveyed to

* Rivet. in Isa. liii. 11.

him, and of right belonging to him, Another man delights in a beautiful field and garden, pleaseth himself with the variety of the flowers and pleasures of the walks ; the owner delights in it upon this account too, loves to consider the nature of the trees and plants ; but he hath a knowledge of it, and delight in it above the other's ; because of his property, he knows the possession of it, and the commodities arising from it, to be his. This knowledge is always with some glimmerings of hopes that God and Christ are his, according to the tenor of the covenant. Though there be not a full assurance, the title and evidence is not clear to him, and may seem to have some flaw in it, which he hath not yet overcome, yet all true faith hath something of comfort and hope with it, for it is wrought by the Spirit as a comforter, convincing of the sufficiency as well as the necessity of the righteousness of Christ, upon which the soul in this saving knowledge flings itself, and follows this glimmering, till he comes to a greater light, whereby to read his own interest in Christ, as Paul did : Gal. ii. 20, ' Who loved me, and gave himself for me.' Afterwards, indeed, there is a knowledge of feeling : 2 Tim. i. 12, ' I know whom I have believed.' I have known him by faith, and I know him by feeling ; I knew him to be good before, and therefore I trusted him ; but since I know whom I have trusted, and have a rich experience of him.

[1.] There is no saving knowledge without this fiducial act. It properly follows upon our espousals with God ; it is a knowledge after contract : Hosea ii. 20, ' I will betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord ;' and therefore must be a knowledge of faith. He that hath no lively motions hath no life, he must have breath at least ; nor is there any lively knowledge of the grace of God in Christ without vehement desires at least after him, and unutterable believing groans. Can any man know God in his wrath who doth not tremble at it, or any man know God in his grace that doth not catch hold of it ? He knows him not that thinks him not excellent enough to be the sole object of his confidence and affiance. No man that disparageth that which is truly excellent in itself can be said to know the excellency of that thing. If I set up anything in the world as the ground of my trust more than God, it is evident that I acknowledge a greater virtue, strength, and power in that than in God and Christ, whom I refuse, and may well be said not to know and understand the transcendent goodness of him that I reject. Lay not, therefore, any claim to a knowledge of God as almighty, infinite goodness, and tender bowels, if you resign not up yourselves wholly to him : to his grace to pardon you, to his power to relieve you, to the death of Christ to mortify sin, and that in his own way, the way of his precepts, not in ways of our own invention and presumption. But, alas ! do not many prop up themselves in some earthly thing, as if there were no God in Israel to be sought unto ; strengthen themselves in their own righteousness, as if there were no Mediator commissioned and sent into the world ? Confidence in any other thing denies the being of God, or if not that, yet it denies the excellency of God ; if not that, the goodness of God ; and so implies that there is no knowledge of God as he is gracious and glorious in himself, because there is no trust in him. I am sore afraid most of the knowledge of God and Christ we have in this age is a mere notion of faith, without value, like a ring without the diamond. He knows best that hath concocted in his heart what he understood in his head.

[2.] The highest rational knowledge of God cannot profit, without this knowledge of faith. The general and common knowledge of Christ is but a knowing after the flesh, not in the power of his Spirit, and can no more

advantage than the Jews' knowing him, or Judas his living with him, did them or him without believing. In the Scripture, Christians are not called knowing persons, but believers. It is a pleasure to a physician to consider the nature of a medicine, and pierce into the quality of each ingredient in it; but if he be invaded by the disease for which that medicine is proper, all his knowledge of it and delight in it will be no support to his body, unless he takes it and joins it in a close contest with the distemper. All the pleasure he hath had in the search and contemplation of it, and the experience of the strength of it upon his patients, will not check the malady of his vitals, or stop the rage of the humour, though his knowledge were as large as Solomon's, without application of the remedy. Christ is the remedy for our spiritual diseases, faith is the application. A man is no more a Christian by knowing the nature of God and Christ in a notional way, or being able to unfold the mysteries of redemption in generous strains, than a philosopher, who can discourse accurately of the nature of metals and jewels, can be said to be rich, when he hath never a penny in his purse. The knowledge entitles him to a natural wisdom, but the possession to wealth. If he were a slave in the galleys, the riches of his knowledge would never strike off the weight of his chains; one jewel in possession to pay for his redemption would be of more value than all his philosophy. And just such a person is he that delights in the knowledge of his bags and quantity of gold, but makes not application of it to his present indigencies; it is as if he had none, but were the poorest beggar that craves an alms from door to door. There is as great a difference between this notional and fiducial knowledge, as there is between the knowledge of an angel, who comes under the wing of Christ for his confirmation in his happy estate, and the knowledge of a devil, who rejected him as his head, which is thought by some to be the devil's sin. It is likely by Scripture it was pride, and probably it was pride of this nature, as I may have occasion to shew in the prosecuting the doctrine of unbelief. As the angels' knowledge of Christ being proposed as their head could not have advantaged them without an act of consent to him, and acceptance of him, answering to faith in us, as well as a knowledge (they had not else come under his wing as rational creatures by an election and approbation of him), so neither can our knowledge of him without an accepting of him.

[3.] The clearer a saving knowledge is, the stronger will be our faith and confidence in God and Christ, and the stronger our faith, the stronger our knowledge. As the more knowledge a physician hath of the nature of simples, the more confidently will he apply them; and the more he finds their virtue in the application, the surer knowledge of them he arrives unto. The more we spiritually understand God, the more we shall trust him on his own credit; and this is properly faith. All the attributes of God are the crutches of faith, the bladders upon which faith swims. When we know the strength of them, and are sensible of the sufficiency of them and our own need, we shall with greater assurance rely upon them, as they are engaged in his promises: his wisdom, in making promises that he *can* accomplish; his faithfulness, in making promises that he *will* accomplish; his power, in being able to make good every tittle of his word. Not an attribute of God but inspires faith with fresh vigour. And so the more we spiritually and sensibly know the tenor of Christ's commission, the ends of his death, the causes and ends of his resurrection and ascension, we shall the more willingly cast our souls upon that security, and draw sweetness by faith from every flower in God's garden. The angels adore the goodness of God more fervently than we can, and have a greater confidence in that goodness, be-

cause their apprehensions of it are clearer, and their taste and experience of it hath been stronger. The brightest needles move quickest, and stick fastest to the loadstone. The clearer our knowledge, the closer our adherence. He that spiritually knows God and Christ, will rest upon God's bare word with more stedfastness than if he had the strongest assurances of all the princes in the world for a great estate.

7. It is a progressive knowledge, still aiming at more knowledge and more improvements of it. Though the knowledge of God be at first infused into us by the inspiration of the Spirit, yet neither that in the head, nor grace in the heart, have their full strength at their first birth, but attain their stature gradually. Natural knowledge, which is a common work of God upon men, arrives not at its growth in a moment, but in a tract of time. He that first found out the inclination of the loadstone to the pole did not presently apprehend all the virtues of the loadstone, nor was able to sail about the world by it, though this afterwards grew up from the first invention. We go up a mountain step by step. Christ doth not perform all the parts of his prophetic office at once; there is a further declaration of the name of God to succeed the first: John xvii. 26; 'I have declared thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them.' And the ravishments by the virtue and influences of his second shall exceed those of the first revelation, for those further declarations are accompanied with greater manifestations of affection, and fuller communications of divine love to the soul. Some things are too bright for the soul at the first opening of its weak eyes. Men at their first conversion have but glimpses of things, as the man, Mark viii. 24, who saw 'men as trees walking,' till Christ put his hand upon his eyes, and made him see objects before him more distinctly. As the stone from our hearts, so scales from our eyes, fall off by degrees. No man is so wise but he may be wiser.

(1.) All true knowledge is alluring. The first sight of a mystery is transporting, and also alluring to a further inquiry: Prov. i. 5, 'A wise man will hear, and will increase learning;' he will arise to more sublime thoughts and discoveries. He will be adding, as in arithmetic, figure to figure, till he comes to a just sum, deducing one rule from another till he come to the utmost; as the branch grows from the body of the tree, and one branch from another. It is the nature of all true knowledge to sharpen the mind for more. He that hath found a mine will follow the vein till he masters it. The scholar that hath a taste of any curious learning will not leave the pursuit till he hath pierced into the bowels of it, and by turning over books, and stretching his thoughts, hath increased his stock. It is also the nature of spiritual knowledge to put an edge upon the appetite, and open the understanding wider, that it may be filled with more. 'The voice of it is that of the grave, *Give, give.*' The times of the gospel were promised to be inquisitive times: Dan. xii. 4, 'Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.' A little knowledge of God doth not hush our desires, but awaken them. The barbarous people, by tasting the fruits of Italy, were not at rest till they saw and conquered the country. One taste of God and Christ is to make us cry out, 'Evermore, Lord, give us this bread.' It is to enlarge our appetite, not to dull and scantle it; to engage us to make further inquiries into 'the hope of his calling, and the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,' Eph. i. 16. They had a spirit of knowledge; but the apostle prays for further perfection in the knowledge of Christ, and a fuller opening the eyes of their understandings to get into his secret things, and behold more of his glory. It is as natural for a saving knowledge to press to further attainments, as it is for a counterfeit knowledge to flag in its pursuit.

(2.) It is utterly impossible that any man can have a saving knowledge of God who stands at a stay in what he has, without any desires to make a further progress. As it is impossible faith or a full assent or consent to the doctrine of the gospel can be without unutterable groans for the full application of the good things promised in it, so it is impossible this saving knowledge can be without eager thirsting for a larger communication. He that seeks not after more light never had any saving glimmerings of any in his heart: Prov. xv. 14, 'He that hath understanding seeks knowledge, but the mouth of fools feed on foolishness.' The seeking knowledge is a sign of an understanding heart; any man's feeding on foolishness is an evidence that he understands nothing of the sweetness of a spiritual banquet. That merchant that is sensible of gain will increase his venture and desire richer commodities; the understanding heart will venture out for more spiritual knowledge. As no man hath true grace who doth not make additions, and rise to the exercise of those graces which are more spiritual, more the delight of God and the beauty of the soul, so neither hath he any taste of God and Christ who doth not aspire and travel to more spiritual discoveries of his glory. There is not only to be a knowledge, but a 'following on to know the Lord,' Hos. vi. 3; a 'following hard after him' to see his glory, Ps. lxxiii. 2, 8. He never tasted the sweetness of it that is cloyed with it, nor ever understood the beauty of the prospect, that is not desirous to get up to the top of the hill to pleasure his eyes with a full view. An acquiescence in any degree is a sign the knowledge pretended is but a counterfeit, that God is not the delightful and estimable object of his mind, that there is no experimental acquaintance with him. Certainly, he that esteems him will desire to lie at his feet to receive his instructions, and will implore Christ for the exercise of his prophetic office, which is as truly exercised by his Spirit in the world, as it was in his person in the days of his flesh.

First, This principle of saving knowledge is an active principle. If it be the light of life, a living and lively light, it will by its activity proceed from strength to strength, from dawn to daylight, from daylight to sunrise, and from that to the meridian, Prov. iv. 18. The sun in a statue will stand like a stock, but not the sun in the heavens. If, through the darkness of the understanding, there is an alienation from the life of God, Eph. iv. 18, then by an enlightened understanding there is an approach to the life of God. Can partakers of the life of God stand at a stay? Can we ever be like God by ignorance and small measures of knowledge? God cannot increase in the knowledge of himself, because the knowledge of himself is, as himself, infinite; but that soul that is truly God-like aspires to as high a knowledge of him as the creature is capable of. He hath no desire to take further steps in grace, who doth not desire to thrive in the knowledge of Christ, which is as the dew of grace.

Secondly, There is no conformity to Christ without a thirst after more knowledge of God. Our Saviour grew in wisdom as he did in stature, Luke ii. 52; not that Christ had any sinful ignorance, but the habits of wisdom and knowledge infused into his human nature grew up to maturity according to his natural growth. They are not his members that grow not proportionably to the head, and, being rational members, they must grow in knowledge as well as in strength. The image of God in the new creature doth partly consist in knowledge, Col. iii. 10, yet it is not necessary to this conformity that all should have an equal degree of knowledge. It is probable all in heaven have not an equal vision of God, since there are different degrees of glory; yet the least degree of the vision of God there is with a perfect conformity, and without the mixture of the least impurity. But there is no

conformity here to Christ without some knowledge of him. Some grow according to means and measures, and an ardent thirst for fuller manifestations of him. Some think that in heaven there will be a constant proficiency in the knowledge of God;* and why not, since finite is capable of additions as numbers are of more units, which may be increased by adding, yet none so great but may be made greater by addition of more to them?

Thirdly, He can have no desire to enjoy God who doth not desire a clearer knowledge of him. What desires can he have of fruition, who doth not delight to know more of him whom he pretends he is willing to enjoy? He hath no mind to set foot in heaven, nor hath any notions of the happiness of that place, whose affections are not enlarged to a further prospect of him who is the sole essential happiness there. Whosoever hath had any taste of heavenly pleasure, will endeavour to beautify his understanding with divine objects, since part of the happiness of heaven consists in a perfection of that faculty of the mind.

It is then certain that a knowing soul cannot be idle, but inquisitive; spiritual knowledge is no less attractive than natural. When we come to a little knowledge in those lower things, we are still aiming at more, as those that found out new countries were still making more voyages to perfect their inquiry. It is impossible that any that have tasted the saving knowledge of God can rest in low measures, but they will be attempting a full discovery.

This progressiveness consists chiefly,

First, In a clearer sight of what was in part known; not so much extensively, in an increase of particular objects, as intensively, in a clearer view and more spiritual apprehension of what we knew before; as growth in grace is not in new graces (for they are all included in the habit of grace first put into the soul), but in a strength of each particular grace and the actings of it. As a man that studies the nature of some particular grace, and the actings of it. As a man that studies the nature of some particular creature, by his search comes into a sight, not of new objects, but of more reasons of things, and a clearer inspection into that which was the object of his knowledge before. The knowledge in heaven consists not so much in the knowing new objects as in knowing with an inexpressible clearness God and Christ, whom we know but in a glass, and that darkly in the world, not in an addition of new objects, but an accession to the degrees of our knowledge.

Secondly, It is a growth in estimation of the object, and strength of desires for it. It is a certain rule in spirituals, as it is in naturals, everything when it moves regularly to its centre moves more swiftly towards the end of its motion; so will the motion of the soul be in longings and thirstings after a more full view of God and Christ, the nearer it comes to salvation. The 'soul breaks for the longings it hath to the judgments of God,' Ps. cxix. 20, the methods of his wisdom; one desire treads upon another; he desires, and is covetous for more longings for him; he longs, and thinks he doth not long enough. It grows in estimations of him: Ps. cxix. 72, 'The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver.' He values it daily more and more above all the excrements of this earth.

Thirdly, It is not a growth or desire terminating in a notion of God, so much as the fruits and proper intendments of that notion. It is a mystery of faith and a mystery of godliness, a mystery to be known and mystery to be practised. But the growth is in the mystery of faith, in order to a growth in it as it is a mystery of godliness, to know God for the ends for which he is revealed, and Christ for the ends for which he was commissioned. It is a desire for the way of God's precepts, Ps. cxix. 27, 33, not to indulge carnal

* Zanch. in Hos. vi. 3.

affections or an intellectual curiosity, but to direct his paths and strengthen him in his walk. A man in a journey desires not so much the knowledge of the nature of the soil or of the fruits of the country, as the way of it, to attain his journey's end. David, having a knowledge of God, and being ravished with it, desires to be acquainted with the way to the fruition of that whereof he had some sight; hence he so often desires God to open his eye, that he might behold him, and teach him the way that he might attain to him. He that hath a delightful prospect of excellent buildings and fruitful grounds which he may have the possession of, would have a more accurate survey of them. The next step naturally is to desire to know a way thither: Prov. i. 5, 'A wise man will increase in learning,' תהבילות, the word signifies properly the mariner's art or pilot's skill in steering a ship, or an acuteness in acting. A wise man will hear and increase in learning, in order to improve what he knows for his direction and steerage in his course in the world, which is as a stormy sea, and needs care and skill.

2. As there is a difference in the effects of this knowledge, so also in the manner of it.

1. Saving knowledge is distinct. Though grace be not perfect, yet there is an habit of grace, and all the parts of grace in the soul of a renewed man; so, though this knowledge be not perfect, yet there is a distinct view of God and Christ in all the necessary parts of knowledge. Another may know the attributes of God, but he sees not the glory of them shining into the heart: 2 Cor. iv. 6, 'To give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.' It is a distinct view of God's perfections, in their affecting glory; of his wisdom, in contriving redemption; his justice, in punishing our surety; his mercy, in bestowing pardon in his beloved one; and the beauty of his holiness in all: and of those a believer hath a distinct apprehension in his mind, and a gracious and distinct impression of them on his heart. He knows the nature of Christ, his offices, the fruits of his death, and comforts of his resurrection, the cordials of his intercession, so orderly as to make use of them in his several exigencies, and have recourse to each of them by faith in his distinct pressures. It is a shining into the heart, as the sun upon the world at the creation, whereby Adam had a distinct view of the creatures then formed; and in the new creation, this divine light breaks into the soul, repairs the faculty, whereby there may be a plain spiritual view of the glory of God, as figured in the appearance of Christ. An owl sees the light, but not distinctly that or anything by it, not because there is want of light, but a want of a due disposition and strength in the eye to discern it. It is a manifestation of God's name, John xvii. 6. God was more distinctly known by his name *Jehovah* among the Israelites, than he had been in the world before, *i. e.* in the manifestations of his truth and power in performing the promise of deliverance to them; so he is known in Christ in fuller expressions, and more letters of his name, than he was to the Israelites. The other knowledge is as the sight of a man in his picture; this, as the knowledge of a man in his person, whereby his lively disposition and excellencies are discerned. It is a knowledge by inward manifestation and irradiation of the soul. The times of ignorance are called night and darkness in Scripture; in the night there is no evidence of the true figures and colours of things. The time of divine discovery is called day, and light; and believers, 'light in the Lord;' there is a plain appearance of the object in its excellency manifest to them, whereby they discern things that differ: the difference between Christ and the world, grace and sin. It differs from the knowledge of others, as the sight of a ship by an unskilful eye from that

of the shipwright or pilot, who understands all the parts of the workman's skill; or the sight of a picture by a limner, and one ignorant of the art. One sees the hidden pieces of art, the other the outward figure and composure. The knowledge of the Christian is the work of the Spirit by special grace, the other is the work of education and industry. A divine work is more clear than a human. It is such a knowledge as the apostles had after the Holy Ghost came upon them, and had dispelled their darkness, scattered their shadows, and refined their minds, and made them see the counsel of God in the sufferings of Christ, and behold the bottom of it with a divine light; whereas before, their knowledge was confused and feeble, they scarce knew before he was to die: after his death, they understood his sufferings, but nothing of the true reason and design of them till the Spirit descended upon them; and, therefore, Christ tells them in the time of his life, that though he 'had been so long with them, they did not know him,' John xiv. 9. Unless the knowledge of God and Christ be thus distinct, it may stuff the head, but not improve the soul.

2. It is a certain knowledge. Not a guess or imagination, but a real thing, as if the soul had a perfect demonstration. It is surer than the knowledge of the first principles or common notions in man; surer than the perceptions of sense, or conclusions of reason. The knowledge of things we have by experience depends upon the deceivable sense, which often needs the correction of reason; the knowledge we have by reason is uncertain, because the mind of man is often prepossessed with crooked notions, which cannot be the rule to measure straight truths by. Reason is full of uncertainty, and dubious; and the more we know by natural reason, the more we doubt. But this knowledge is more divine than any demonstration,* because it is not founded upon human reason, but divine and infallible revelation, which can neither deceive nor be deceived. It is by an inward sense and taste, which renders a man more certainly intelligent of what he feels, than all men in the world can be by a rational discourse without a sense. Truth is inlaid, and inlaid in the heart; there is a plerophory and full assurance of knowledge, Col. ii. 2. Other knowledge doth fluctuate, and a man rather suspects that he sees, than see clearly,† which is rather an opinion of God and Christ than knowledge, such as the philosophers had of natural things, which they could not assure themselves whether it was clear science or opinion. But saving knowledge is a solid and certain apprehension of the object known. Hence, it is called a sight of the glory of God with open face, 2 Cor. iii. 18, an intellectual and spiritual sight, 'the evidence of things not seen,' Heb. xi. 1, ἐλεγχος; such a conviction that brings a fulness of light with it to clear the thing, and make the heart fall down under the power of it, and nonplusseth all disputes against it. As the Spirit so strongly convinceth of sin, as to arrest all objections and pleas, banish them out of the heart of the sinner, so he strongly convinceth of the truth of God and Christ, and chaseth away all the carnal reasonings, as the light of the rising sun doth darkness before it. It is such an evidence that brings substance along with it, 'the substance of things hoped for.' It evidenceth God and Christ, and the things of God and Christ, to be substantial, solid things, and not imaginary notions and doubtful opinions. This was promised in the times of the gospel: Isa. lii. 6, 'My people shall know my name; they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak; behold, it is I.' The repetition of a thing in the Hebrew dialect shews the certainty of the thing spoken of. They knew God by the prophets; they should more surely

* Θεσιώτερόν τι πάσης ἀποδείξεως.—Origen.

† Amyrald. Thes. Salmur. part ii. p. 91, thes. xxxvi.

know him in the times of the gospel, in the greatness of the deliverance he would work for them. It is clearer than the prophetic visions ; for it is a sight that is produced by the dawning of the day, and the arising of the day-star in the heart, 2 Peter i. 19, which is meant of a knowledge of Christ in this world, for in heaven the knowledge shall be by the light of the sun. It is a knowledge here which is the forerunner of a full knowledge in heaven, as the day-star is of the rising sun. And Christ himself affirms to God this certainty of knowledge, John xvii. 8, ' They have surely known that I came out from thee,' which is more than a loose opinion. And, indeed, there is nothing more sure to an opened understanding than a divine light, though to an eye sore with sin the light is as imperceptible as the light of the sun to the eyes of an owl.

(1.) The manner of this knowledge must bear some proportion to the object, and the manner of revealing it. As the object excels all other objects, so the manner of knowing must be different from all other manner of knowledge, and therefore more certain in what we know of it, by how much the objects God and Christ are more excellent and real, the living God, and an eternal Christ. It is not coined by flesh and blood, nor depends upon the blindness of reason ; but it is *from* the Father which is in heaven, as well as *of* the Father which is in heaven, Mat. xvi. 17 ; a manifestation from Christ, John xvii. 6, ' I have manifested thy name ;' a ' sure word ' whereby it is taught, 2 Peter i. 19, surer than all the maxims of the world. The object is most real : God, the author of all being, the fountain of nature and grace ; Christ, the band of the whole creation. The manner of revealing was most certain ; the manner of knowing must be in some measure suitable to the object known, and the way of its manifestation : the principles of faith are more certain than those of any science.

(2.) It is wrought by the enlightening virtue of the Holy Ghost, and therefore must be most certain. The knowledge of God, as well as faith, is the gift of God, wrought in the soul by inspiration. God gives not erroneous principles to the creature. The debauchery of our reasons was not from God originally, but from the lasting invasion of sin, and permitted by God as a judge to continue for our punishment. This teaching is by ' the Spirit of truth,' John xiv. 17, 1 John ii. 27, who inwardly presents the excellency of God and Christ to the understanding, as the word doth to the ear, and that not like a flash of lightning that gives a vanishing light, and after leaves us in a worse darkness than it found us ; but he abides as a Spirit of truth in all the darkness of this world, for ' he dwells with you, and shall be in you.' The instruction will be certain, till the Spirit prove an uncertain teacher. It is his demonstration, and therefore powerful, 1 Cor. ii. 4, and surer than any demonstration by reason, by how much the Spirit, the teacher of it, is above all the reason in the world ; it is ' the Spirit that searcheth the deep things of God,' 2 Cor. ii. 9, 10, mysteries above the ken of corrupted reason, and hid in the secret place of the Most High, which are therefore most precious, and of the greatest reality and value. Since therefore this knowledge is a fruit of divine teaching, and from an infinitely wise and infallible teacher, the soul of a believer is more assured of the reality of it than it is of its own life and being. He knows by sense and reason that he lives, but the knowledge he hath of God and Christ is by the Spirit, a principle infinitely superior to both the other.

(3.) Saving knowledge is such a knowledge, for kind, as Christ had of God. The words and declaration of God, which God gave to him, he gave to his disciples, John xvii. 8. The knowledge Christ as man had of God is com-

municated to a believer, in the kind, though not in the same measure. And herein doth consist partly our conformity to Christ; the soul is conformed to Christ in all the parts of it. It consists not in the repair of one faculty, for that would be but half a resemblance. It would be monstrous for the will to be conformed to Christ, and the understanding to the devil; the will to be acted by grace, and the understanding possessed by nature. It cannot indeed be supposed in the order of natural operations, how the will can have an holy conformity to Christ, till the understanding hath an intelligent conformity to him. As the will is made like the will of Christ, so the mind is enlightened in a similitude to the mind of Christ; that as Christ is in the heart the ground of the hope of glory, so he is in it the guide of the mind: Philip. ii. 5, 'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus;' 1 Cor. ii. 16, 'But we have the mind of Christ.' 'The spiritual man judgeth all things,' because he understands the mind of Christ; because his mind is informed and enlightened by that Spirit which illuminated the human mind of Christ. And needs must he judge as Christ did, who hath not only a knowledge of the doctrine of Christ, but a mind acted by the same Spirit of Christ, and suited to the mind of Christ, and hath such notions and piercing insight into the things of God, for the kind, as Christ had. I will not say that this is the sense of the place, though something of that nature seems to be included in the manner of the apostle's argument, or may be inferred from thence. We may be said to know as Christ doth, as we are said to be holy as Christ is holy, in regard of likeness, as the light of the stars and sun are true light, have a likeness one to the other, and are of the same kind, yet the light in the sun is more full and clear than that in the stars. As there will at the last day be a glory of the body like to the glorious body of Christ, Philip. iii. 21; and a glory of the soul much more like to the soul of Christ; so there is an initial likeness to Christ in each faculty in every renewed man. Now as Christ's knowledge of God was certain, and the knowledge of himself was certain, so this saving knowledge of God and Christ in a true believer is as certain, for the measure of it in this world. And though there be doubts and waverings in the hearts of believers, yet they do not respect the object, the nature of God and Christ, and the ends of his death, but are in regard of the subject, and an interest in those glorious things. Now though this knowledge be imperfect, yet it is certain in every believer. They know, though it be but in part, 1 Cor. xiii. 12, and that which they know is certain. There is certainty in star-light as well as in sun-light, though the light be not so much. 'We see through a glass darkly.' It is a certain sight, though not clear, because the organ is not fully fitted for it. Every true believer can say, as those, John vi. 69, 'We believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.' Before the light of the knowledge of God broke in savingly upon him, he had doubtful notions of those things, he counted them as shadows, discoursed of them because the rest of the world did, and because he had been brought up that way, yet without any savour of them. He knew not whether he knew or no, as Paul, whether he was in or out of the body. But since, he beholds such a clearness and reality in the mysteries of the gospel, that he is more confirmed in the certainty of them than of any in the world. There is light shot in, which carries its own evidence with it, and is too bright to be nonplussed by the darkness of reason. The things of God and Christ are discerned in the head, and realised in the heart.

(3.) It is a firm knowledge. Some have a floating knowledge of God. Truth in their mind doth dance as the image of the sun or stars in a pail, according to the motion of the water. Truth and error are like a pair of

scales, sometimes up and sometimes down. But as true faith, so saving knowledge, is stedfast like a needle, sticking to the loadstone without wavering: Col. ii. 5, 'Stedfastness of our faith,' *στερέωμα*, *firmamentum fidei*, firmament of faith, as stable as the heaven and heavenly bodies keeping their constant stations and courses, and admitting nothing heterogeneous into them. It is but a shadow of knowledge which halts between two opinions. The knowledge of Christ being admitted upon the highest account frames the soul into an acquiescence in it. It is 'an unction from the holy one,' 1 John ii. 20, which, as it opens, so it fortifies the understanding. It is an habit: Heb. v. 14, 'Who by reason of use;' by reason of *habit*, in the Greek. The faculty is firm, and can never be totally vitiated; though it may, as the natural taste, be impaired by some diseased humour tincturing the palate, yet it returns again to its former temper. It is such a knowledge that keeps men in a way of righteousness, and prevents them from returning to be swine. It makes them see the mire to loathe it, and the purity of God to love him. They that are taught of God, depart not from his truth: Ps. cxix. 102, 'I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.' The psalmist renders God's teaching him as a reason why he did not depart from God's judgments. Therefore that knowledge of God, which is taught by God, is an establishing knowledge, not a volatile, airy thing, such as children have, which are 'carried away by every wind of doctrine,' Eph. iv. 14, tossed to and fro between one passion and another, rather than between one reason and another; but a settling ballast, such as the martyrs had who were slain for the word of God, the divine *λόγος*, and the testimony they bore to his person and offices, which they held, and held as an undoubted truth, Rev. v. 9. They held the transcript of God and Christ imprinted on their hearts firm, as a marble doth the letters engraven on it; the other sort of knowledge is fading, as easily blotted out as letters upon sand with the next wind. In the one there is only a taste of 'the powers of the world to come,' of the death and resurrection of Christ, which are the powers of the age of the Messiah, which was called by the Jews the world to come, Heb. vi. 5; the other is as a constant sight in the heart, as firm as a graft in the stock, which becomes one with it; not only a light of truth, but a love of truth; notions spring into the mind, and love stands ready to set and root them. If any man therefore pretends to a knowledge of God, and withdraws from him to the things of this world, and the miry ways of sin, he knew no more of God than a swine doth of the cleansing bath; he discovers a greater hatred of God, for whensoever any good is forsaken after it is pretended to be known, it shews a greater detestation of it and desire of disunion from it. Whatsoever therefore the pretences of apostates are, they never knew God, because God is so lovely in all his perfections, that it is impossible for any soul that knows him not to love him, and cleave to him.

(4.) This saving knowledge of God and Christ is, in all the affections which attend it in the soul, unexpressible. The affections rising from it are unexpressible by the soul that feels it; all words are below the sense, as a spark is below the brightness of a flame. In common things we find often a secret power excite a liking or dislike in our mind which we cannot fully discover to others, either in the greatness of the pleasure or abhorrency which is in ourselves. The natural affections we have to something admit of no expression, much less the spiritual affections. A friend that you know and love dearly, whose virtues you admire, you can never discover so exquisitely in his endowments as that another should admire and love him with an affection equal to what you bear to him. Who can imagine the depth of David's sense in his contemplations of God under those spiritual strains he

clothes himself with in his Psalms, unless he felt the same inward transports as David did? Who can understand the exquisite satisfaction our Saviour had in his thoughts of his Father, in his addresses to him, and obedience to his will, unless he could be equal to him in all those? It is the same thing in spiritual as in natural knowledge. No man can understand the delight a scholar takes in his inquiries into some curious learning, but he that hath had a taste of the same pleasure himself, no more than a man can understand the heat of fire that never felt it. Paul, in his revelations, heard 'words unspeakable' in their own nature, as well as 'unlawful for him to utter,' 2 Cor. xii. 4. Nor can any conceive the inward ravishments of a soul in the meditations of God and Christ, who never had a spiritual view of the excellency of those ravishing objects.

Use.

I. Information.

1. See the insufficiency of all other knowledge to eternal happiness. Other sciences are shadows of wisdom; this a sound wisdom, Prov. iii. 21, referring to the study of the wisdom of God. All other kind of knowledge delights a man at present, help him to pass his life with some comfort, but gives not a drop of balsam at the hour of death for any spiritual wound, or the least cordial dram for a drooping soul; whereas this sound wisdom is a treasure of things new and old, to support under any calamity. It will keep us from being afraid of sudden fear, or of the desolation of the wicked when it comes, for the Lord, that is savingly known, shall be our confidence, and keep our feet from being taken, Prov. iii. 24-26.

(1.) Skill in the affairs of the world, and arts useful to human societies, first appeared in the seed of the serpent and the idolatrous generation of the world. The posterity of Cain, the head of the unbelieving world, are upon record in Scripture for such inventions. When his generations are reckoned, there is Jabal who first invented the art of ordering cattle, and Jubal his brother, the inventor of music, and Tubal Cain, the first artificer in brass and iron, Gen. iv. 20-22. No such remark set upon the children of Seth, reckoned, Gen. v. 21, 22; only Enoch's walking with God, and Lamech's prophecy of Noah, as if he had been the promised seed; their minds were taken up with that knowledge which fitted them for a better life. The knowledge of the Greeks, whence the choicest learning was transmitted to Europe, was derived from Phœnicia to Egypt, the one the posterity of Canaan, the other also of Ham, both eminent for idolatry.

(2.) Christ never directed men in the knowledge of any thing but of God. He never took flesh, nor laid it down, to make us philosophers or artificers, skilful in the affairs of the world or knowing in political concerns, but to purchase for us the knowledge of the mysteries of heaven and sanctifying grace; he was a prophet to manifest the name of God, not the nature of creatures. He came, not to instruct us in the nature of the elements, the reason of natural motions, to inform us of the nature of the stars and heavenly bodies, but the nature of God, the designs and methods of his grace. The teaching worldly skill was too low for the grandeur of his prophetic office, and should be too low for our choicest consideration, but only in order to the enlarging our faculties for more clear apprehensions or illustrations of divine knowledge, to be foundations for spiritual meditations, and more sensible perception of heavenly truth. Our Saviour knew all the secrets of nature, the usefulness of human arts to the comfort of the world, but never recommended any of them as sufficient to happiness. Nor after his resurrection, in his discourses with the disciples, did he acquaint them with the curiosities of paradise or the orders of angels, but with the pro-

phets, concerning himself and ends of his death, and resurrection, and glory in heaven, Luke xxiv. Had those been sufficient or necessary means, the Scripture had been full of natural demonstrations, it had been a book of nature, instead of a book of grace. It was not the design of it to render men scholars, but Christians; and though there be many excellent sprinklings of natural learning in divine writ, they are occasionally set down to lead us to the understanding the nature of God, and our own duty, the two states of man, his misery by sin, and his happiness by grace. And therefore, to rest in that which God never rested in, Christ never taught or admired, to rest in that which devils and wicked men are all acquainted with and are no enemies unto, can never render a soul happy.

(3.) It can never of itself help us to the knowledge of divine things. A man with treasures of other knowledge in his head may have, and often have, hearts insensible of the beauty of God and excellency of Christ. It may make a man higher, by head and shoulders, than other men, but never make him like to God. The highest intellectuals, without those saving apprehensions, are but peacocks' feathers with black feet; they can no more purify the soul than the blood of bulls and goats could atone our sins. The understanding the intricacies of nature, and the most ingenious mysteries in the world, and a connection of all the most useful worldly sciences, cannot advantage our spiritual and eternal happiness, because the things themselves which are the objects of that knowledge cannot do it. The knowledge of a thing cannot do more than the thing known can do. If the bowels of nature and moral truth were as open to any of us as they are to the highest angel, nay, had we an understanding of all divine as well as human mysteries, without this affectionate knowledge it would render us just nothing: 1 Cor. xiii. 2, 'Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, I am nothing.' Of no account before God. A man may be theologically knowing and spiritually ignorant. Nicodemus was none of the lowest sect, a pharisee, nor of the lowest form among them, a ruler among them, had the knowledge of the law above the vulgar, yet was ignorant of the design of the Messiah, and the mystery of the new birth. A man may be excellent in the grammar of the Scripture, yet not understand the spiritual sense of it. As a man may have so much Latin as to construe a physician's bill, and tell the names of the plants mentioned in it, yet understand nothing of the particular virtues of those plants, or have any pleasure in the contemplation of them, so we may discourse of God, and the perfections of God, and the intendments of the great things of Christ, without a sense of them. Though this be a good preparatory to a spiritual knowledge, yet it is insufficient of itself without some further addition. It doth not heal the soul's eye, nor chase away the spiritual darkness. 'In much wisdom is much grief,' Eccles. i. 18. In this wisdom only there is the choicest pleasure.

(4.) It often hurts and hinders men from the saving knowledge of God and Christ. The wisest men are not always the disciples of Christ, but many times enemies to him; the most ingenious men have often been the most malicious and ingenious devils. Natural wisdom is most apt to count divine wisdom foolishness, 1 Cor. i. 21, 23; a hatred of Christ often perks up under it. The greatest philosophers in the primitive times were the sharpest enemies to Christianity, and while they were intent upon human wisdom, they counted divine revelation no better than a fable, and scorned to sit at the feet of divine revelation, which agreed not with their own idolised principles. Unsanctified wisdom is the devil's greatest tool.

The serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field, and this creature is culled out by the devil to be the instrument of the first seduction of mankind. The affection of a knowledge not due to Adam brought a cloud upon Adam and his posterity, and separated him from the knowledge of his Creator, which was to be his sole happiness. The intent poring upon red hot iron, or other metals, blinds the eye, and hinders it from seeing the sun, or any thing else by it. Too much intensesness in carnal wisdom dims the eye to spiritual objects. The common people knew Christ, and thirsted for the knowledge of him, Mark xii. 37, when the intelligent pharisees were as spiritually blind as bats, and so wicked as to boast of their unbelieving ignorance, and set it as a pattern for the people: John vii. 48, 49, 'Have any of the rulers, or of the pharisees, believed on him? But this people, who know not the law, are cursed.' Upon which account it is remarked by the evangelical historian as a matter of astonishment, that 'a great number of the priests were obedient to the faith,' Acts vi. 7. It is better to have a little of that knowledge which conducts to a Redeemer, than much of that which puffs up, and makes you swell too big for a mediator.

Well, then, let not other knowledge swallow up your pursuits after this. Other knowledge is useful, a gift of God, but it is the handmaid, not the mistress. It must not thrust out that which is more noble; the light of a candle equals not that of the sun. The angels are not said to bend a look into natural things, though they exactly know the order of them; but it is their employment, as well as their happiness, to stand before God, to view his face, to inquire into the things of Christ. That which angels most affect, should be the affecting object of our souls, which differ in their spiritual nature but little from that of an angel. Other knowledge will die with our bodies, this will live with our souls; that vanisheth with our breath, and this is perfected in glory. That renders us not happy, it doth not satisfy our curiosity; it is stone instead of bread; it strikes not off one link from the chain of spiritual darkness in us; it is no fortification against death and hell. But divine knowledge satisfies our desires, nourishes the soul, is bread to our hunger, light to our eyes, music to our ears, a cordial to our hearts, and the womb of it is full of nothing but felicity. In short, it is the light of life, spiritual, eternal, the other at best but the light of a natural and temporary life. Let not, therefore, the itch of our curiosity, wherewith Adam hath infected us, stop our ears against the instructions of God. Let none of us for a fading delight lose that which is solid and substantial. We shall be like that person, that while he was busy in contemplating heavenly bodies, tumbled into a ditch; and we, while we aim only at skill in other things, fall into an eternal ignorance of the most lovely and necessary objects.

II. Information. We see here the order of God's working, if knowledge be a necessary means. First knowledge, then grace; first knowledge, then that life which is eternal. No house can possibly be built without a foundation; the groundwork first, then the superstructure. Illumination leads the way, and the inclinations of the will follow. God doth not cross the natural order of the faculties in his operations, though he doth their corruption. He leads men by the cords of a man, by those natural obligations on him he makes use of in his way of working; expels darkness, to make room for light; opens the understanding, thereby to incline the will; rectifies the prejudicate opinions of God and Christ, his ways and methods. None can be a priest to offer spiritual sacrifices to God, till he be a prophet to discern what is fit to offer to him. An approbation of things that are excellent, and sincerity in the practice, is founded upon knowledge and judgment, Philip. i. 9, 10. The new nature is conveyed by the knowledge of

God and Christ, Col. iii. 10. As ignorance and error were the deformity of the old man, so wisdom and knowledge are the first line in the beauty of the new. The first draught of God is in the mind, and thence terminates in the will. Nathanael had a false notion of Christ; he was possessed with the opinion of the scribes, the doctors of the law, that no prophet could come out of Nazareth, John i. 46; that the people of that place were contemptible in the eye of God, because no prophet had risen from thence, since prophecy was first in the church. But Christ acquaints him with something divine in himself, by telling him his motions, what he did under the fig-tree, ver. 48, convinced him of the folly of his former notions, discovered to him the truth of his prophetic office, acquaints him with undeniable arguments for his information; then his will and acknowledgments orderly follow: 'Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel,' ver. 49. None are enlivened till they be first enlightened by Christ. He is not life to any without being light in the mind: John i. 4, 'The life was the light of men.'

III. Information. The excellency of a true Christian. The best Christian is the best scholar; he hath a knowledge in the issue equal to that of the angels, superior to that of devils, more effectual than that of the greatest philosopher: Prov. xvii. 27, 'A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.' 'The Spirit of the holy God is in him, and light and excellent wisdom,' as was spoken of Daniel, Dan. v. 11, 14. It is a light flowing from the fountain of light, a fruit of divine teaching and divine touch; a true light, John i. 9; more valuable than all the trifling sceptical knowledge in the world. The meanest believer knows, if not more, yet better than the brightest star that fell from heaven. What others see by candle-light, he sees by the light of the sun; what is hidden to others is open to him; what others have a natural understanding of, he hath a spiritual, Col. i. 9, *σύνεσις πνευματική*. The publicans who heard the excellent discourses of Christ concerning the nature of the Father, and the design of his coming into the world, were more excellent than the pharisees, who knew the same divine revelation, but had no affection stirred in them but that of anger against the publisher. The spiritually knowing Christian can discern God in his word better than others can in all his creatures. He practiseth what he knows. The excellency of a drug lies not so much in its quality, as in the operation of that quality. We measure the excellency of things, not by the outward appearance, but the nobleness and usefulness of their effects. The meanness of a Christian doth not so much disparage him, as the excellency of divine knowledge ennobles him. He hath a soul truly God-like, that knows God with a conformity to him. The sun shining upon a body, and the body reflecting the beams of the sun, render it lovely, though low in itself. The knowledge of a Christian is, by inward and close revelation, attended with strong and high reflections. Others know the matter of the gospel, a Christian knows the mystery of the gospel. The strongest natural knowledge is not proportionable to divine things, and therefore renders not the soul as excellent as the spiritual knowledge of God. The one fits men for converse with man; the other for communion with God in this and another world.

IV. Information. How sad is it for men to abuse to wrong ends the means of knowledge, which in itself is eternal life. As men turn grace into wantonness, so they turn knowledge into rebellion; as men will run many scores in debt because grace is free, so some will run more eagerly to sin because they know God is merciful in Christ, and use their knowledge for an encouragement to sin. This is a monster composed of a Christian's

head, and a swine's heart; an angel's wings, and a serpent's body. This is like Belshazzar, to quaff healths in the vessels of the temple. To use it well for gracious ends, is like Solomon, to melt down the gold of Ophir for the service of God, and work it into vessels for the sanctuary. How many are there that are angry with the knowledge they have, and the means to get more, because they cannot be at ease in their sins? Their lusts are enraged, while their consciences are enlightened. The devil's knowledge is so far from assuaging his malice, that it increaseth his fury. They know God as a judge, but regard him not as amiable and worthy to be imitated. The knowledge many philosophers had in the times of the gospel's shine, was so far from enabling them, because of their corruptions, to see the beauty of those discoveries, that they were rather excited to oppose the gospel principles with more stoutness of heart, that it might be truly said of them, as Isa. xlvi. 10, 'Their wisdom and their knowledge perverted them.' It is base to turn the means of the knowledge of God into the service of the devil. It is good when we use them to check us in sin, to wean us from it, and render God more lovely and desirable to our souls. God's discoveries of himself are not that he may be abused, but that he may be loved. He shews himself in his goodness, which is his glory; the end of goodness is to attract our affections, not to excite our enmity.

V. Information. If the knowledge of God and Christ be the necessary means to eternal life, how deplorable is that want of this necessary knowledge of God which is among us! How lamentable are the cataracts bred in the eye of our understanding by the power of the flesh! Nicodemus* could not understand the first principles of Christianity, though he had been educated in the church, studied the law, had an honourable notion of Christ, was affected with his miracles, and was instructed in the principles of Christianity by the mouth of truth itself. How great is our blindness in the things of the kingdom of God! The knowledge many men have of Christ is a knowledge of his outside, not of his spiritual nature and excellency, so as to relish him. The notions of the goodness of God, and salvation by Christ, are transporting doctrines; men are pleased with them as children are with the pictures in a philosopher's book, without studying or knowing anything of the inward sweetness and learning in it; without prying into, and being savourily affected with, the mysteries of the gospel. They have a knowledge of God and Christ by report, as men have of a famous prince, without any acquaintance, and happy familiarity with him; as defective in this true knowledge as a ploughman is in the principles of astronomy. Most men's lives are a dream; they profess religion, account themselves happy in that profession, content themselves with some self-pleasing fancies and notions, without distinct inquiries into the truths of heaven. How sad is it to have eyes, and not know the sun; to have understandings, and not know that which is only worthy to be known; and not see God, who is as visible by his word and works as the sun by its light! The irrational creatures outstrip us in the sense of what concerns the good of their nature; the crane and swallow, the ox and ass, are better proficients in the good belonging to their nature, than corrupted man in what is necessary for his happiness, Jer. viii. 7, Isa. i. 3.

1. This ignorance is natural. It was the glory of man in his creation to have the knowledge of God. The goodness of the creatures, which God beheld in them after they were formed by him, consisted in their natures and qualities suitable to them. If other creatures had qualities suitable to their natures, the noblest creature could not be defective. If man had been

* Daille sur Jean iii.

created with an ignorance of God, he could not have been good, under that which is the deformity of a rational nature. But since the crack by the fall, there is not a man that by nature understands God, or knows him to seek him. God, in his exact search in the world after its pollution, found not a man but was as ignorant as he was corrupt : Ps. xiv. 2, 3, ' The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God ;' and the result is, that they were ' all gone aside ; they were altogether become filthy ; not a man that doeth good, no, not one.' Not a man without blindness in his understanding, as well as filthiness in his will and practice ; which, lest it should be thought to be meant only of a particular deluge of corruption peculiar to that age, the apostle expounds it as a charge against the whole world, comprehended in Jews and Gentiles, Rom. iii. 9-11. We are no more born with a saving knowledge of God in our heads and hearts, than with a skill in philosophy and mathematics ; no, nor so much, for we bring into the world a faculty capable of them by ordinary instruction, but incapable of the other without special illumination. The eye is born quite blind to spiritual, but purblind only to natural, knowledge. It is as possible to read the law in tables of stone after they are pounded to dust, as to read true notions of God and Christ in lapsed nature. This is excellently described by the apostle : Eph. iv. 17, 18, ' Vanity of the mind, darkness in the understanding, and blindness of the heart.' The essential faculties of the rational soul : the mind, the repository of principles, the faculty whereby we should judge of things honest or dishonest ; the understanding, the discursive faculty and the reducer of those principles into practical dictates,—that part whereby we reason and collect one thing from another, framing conclusions from the principles in the mind ; the heart, *i. e.* the will, conscience, affections, which were to apply those principles, draw out those reasonings upon the stage of the life, all corrupted,—one vain, the other dark, and the third stark blind. And the most ingenious nations for natural knowledge and civil prudence verify the apostle's character in their brutish actions.* The Egyptians, that were men famed for their knowledge, and derived the sciences to the other parts of the world, were worse than beasts in their worship. The Greeks, who counted their Athens the eye of the world, were not more refined, when they adored thirty thousand gods, and some of them infamous for murder and adultery, and had three hundred and twenty-four several opinions about the chief good ; and the Romans, eminent for civil prudence, were not much behind them, when they worshipped a fever, and dignified a strumpet with the title of the goddess of flowers. A great philosopher among them takes notice of this ignorance of God in the various notions they have of him.† If you ask an artificer, a poet, a philosopher, a Scythian, a Persian, what God is, you will not find them all of the same opinion. Even those among the heathens, who for acts of justice and temperance might put men under the gospel to the blush, have had a thick darkness upon them in regard of God. They saw not ' the bright light which is in the clouds,' Job xxxvii. 21. The knowledge of God hath been as much out of their ken as those moral virtues were in their practice. And the proneness of men to idolatry in former ages, while the most intelligent persons in the nature and ways of God were living among them, discovers the greatness of men's natural ignorance. The posterity of Noah in the world were overspread with it, while Noah, Shem, and Heber, the father of the Hebrews, were living among them, from whom they heard other instructions. For Noah died in the fifty-seventh year of Abraham ; Shem and Heber after Abraham's death ; the one thirty-

* Moulin, Dec. i. serm. 3, pp. 75, 76.

† Maximus Tyrius, Dissert. i. sect. 3.

five, and the other fifty-four years after, as is gathered from Scripture chronology.* This natural ignorance is in all men by nature; so that Paul had good reason to say that 'the natural man' (which state we are all in as we are born) 'receives not the things of God,' 1 Cor. ii. 14. Every man is born with a veil upon his heart, and spiritual things cannot be discerned by a faculty spiritually depraved. This is partial in good men; they have a light in their minds, but obscure. They know but little of God, nor can ever know him to the utmost, nor search him out unto perfection, because he is infinite. And this is in some more, in some less, according to the acuteness or dulness of their natural capacities, their various diverting employments and conditions in the world; or according to the variety of the means of knowledge, which may be in one place more than in another. Some parts of the world have not the sun in that beauty and strength as it is in others. The best Christian heart, in comparison of what it should be, is a land of darkness, not a fully enlightened Goshen. Since original sin hath dealt with us as the Philistines with Samson, put out our eyes, they are cured but partially in this world; the perfection is reserved for another.

2. This natural ignorance among men under the gospel is wilful. Many have no desire to know what they ought to know of God, that their consciences may not press them to do what they know. They hoodwink themselves, and close their eyes against the light of the glory of God, that they might not see the filthy puddle and hideous deformity of their own hearts. That knowledge which is the ornament of the soul they account the torment of their conscience; are wilfully ignorant, that they may be destroyed more pleasantly, and with less fear. How epidemic is this! The light shines upon the head, yet shines into few hearts; is no more regarded by men than pearls by a swine. It is a disparagement to be ignorant in a man's proper art; not counted so to be defective in this, which is of absolute necessity. Other ignorance is condemned, and this affected. 'The world by wisdom knew not God,' 1 Cor. i. 21. The understanding and natural wisdom is employed in any vile service, rather than inquiries after God, and with more delight entertains a natural discovery than a divine revelation.

(1.) Men are commonly contrary to it. The imaginations which lift up themselves against the knowledge of Christ are the darlings; a mighty unwillingness to have them pulled down and razed to the ground, 2 Cor. x. 5, 6. We have not only an ignorance at our birth, but a stubbornness joined with it. 'A wild ass's colt' is the best term the Scripture gives us, Job xi. 12. The wild ass is the most untamed and unteachable creature.† No beast is more brutish and ignorant than a child at its birth; nor any wild creature kicks more against the tamer than man against the instructions of his Creator. The natural notions of God men are not willing naturally to cherish; they would raze out the engraven letters; but since they are so deeply impressed as not to be obliterated, they fill the characters with dirt, keep them by unrighteousness from being legible, that they may be secure in the practice of their unworthy principles: Rom. i. 28, they 'like not to retain God in their knowledge.' The beams of an heavenly light are offensive to men; like wild beasts, which run from the rising sun into their dark dens. A deaf ear and a stout heart are evident testimonies of an affection to darkness and disaffection to light, John iii. 19. There is a natural 'love to a lie:' 2 Thess. ii. 11, 'For this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they shall believe a lie.' When God gives men up to a lie, he makes no impression of a lie upon them, as he doth of truth and divine knowledge in the illumination of the Spirit, but gives up a man to himself,

* Vossii Histor. Pelag. lib. iii. part iii. sect. 6, p. 365.

† Mercer.

withdraws his light, the natural consequence whereof is to run the road of nature, and believe a lie rather than truth. Since Adam's credulity is the inheritance of his posterity, they take God for a serpent, and the serpent for a god, and are as unwilling to receive the sparks of the one as they are desirous to entertain the deceits of the other. Whosoever hath unworthy and despicable thoughts of God is averse to any beam that discovers him; no man can affect to know that which he doth not value.

(2.) Men are naturally conceited that they know enough of God. There are two deplorable qualities in man.

First, An incapacity to understand the mysteries of God, by reason of the dulness of the flesh.

Secondly, An unwillingness to confess his ignorance, by reason of pride and conceitedness. Man by birth is a headstrong creature; yet, as vain as he is, he would be counted wise: Job xi. 12, 'Vain man would be wise,' and that in the things of heaven. Those that know least of God are transported with an overweening conceit that they know most, that they know enough, and more than enough. As in the sight of God's majesty we think ourselves nothing, so in the ignorance of him we think ourselves more than we are. When sick men conceit themselves sound, they will wilfully refuse any remedy which may convey health: John ix. 41, 'Now you say, We see; therefore your sin remains.' The opinion they had of their knowledge made them wilfully refuse the cure of their ignorance.

Thirdly, Men are commonly negligent of knowledge. If there be not a sensible contrariety to it, or a foolish conceit that they have no need of it, though there be a sense of the want of it, yet there is a common negligence in seeking it, and making due inquiries after God. There is a sleep and a pleasure in sleeping; men love to slumber, Isa. lvi. 10. Those who cannot endure a darkness in other things, nor acquiesce in a confused knowledge of them without searching into their causes, and reasons or effects, are well contented with a weak and languishing knowledge of God, quickly tired in their pursuits of him. They look up to the sun, and presently take their eyes off again; glance at spirituals, and fix to naturals. Where is the man who hath intent thoughts upon his Maker and Redeemer? How little or no time is it that we spend daily in viewing his glories by meditation! How many rise and lie down without any reflection upon the Author of their lives and motions, and upon the Mediator, who purchased those for them after a forfeiture! Are not the stupendous works of creation visible, the amazing works of redemption legible? Do not sparks of his wisdom rush out of every creature flying round about us? and yet we are lazy in the improvement of them to attain a further sight of that God who is the author of them. Have we not the sun in the firmament of the gospel, but do we cast our eyes often upon it? Do not little fancies please us more than substance? A prodigious sottishness possesses men, under multiplied motives to endeavour after the knowledge of God. How many are there in the world, and in congregations, that never improve one sermon to advance in the spiritual knowledge of God?

(3.) This wilful ignorance, partly from contrariety, conceitedness, and negligence, is frequent among us. There is among us a common knowledge of God, which prevents the world from being a shambles, and preserves the security of his people. It is a guard to the true seed in the world, as the straw and chaff is to the grain of corn. Abimelech's natural knowledge of God restrained his hands from offering violence to Abraham; but 'saving knowledge' is a fruit not to be found in every hedge. The levity of men in the ways of God is an evidence of it: 'like children, carried about with every

wind of doctrine.' As want of strength makes the bodies, so want of knowledge makes the minds of children capable of being moulded into any form. The assent is not fully given to divine revelations. They may have some of the seed of the word in their affections when they have little in their judgments. If there were a spiritual knowledge of God and Christ, why should men be so soon inveigled with error, and fling off the acknowledgment of those truths, whence they have confessed they have reaped a harvest of comfort? What is the reason evil is so often chosen, since our wills naturally are determined to nothing but under the notion of good, but the blindness of our mind? We never choose evil because it is evil, but because we apprehend it to be good. Where the heart is not won to God, the mind is not enlightened by him. Our little love to him, delight in him, zeal for him, thoughts of him, testify too many dark clouds between him and our understandings. We have no sound sense of his justice if we tremble not at it, no savour of his holiness if we do not strive to imitate it. What though we may have a notion of Christ crucified, risen, and ascended! The mystery of Christ is veiled to our eye if our hearts be sunk into the world and lust. Our darkness comprehends not the shining light, John i. 5. It rather stifles the notions of God than is dispersed by them. How soon do we forget what we seem to know! Our Saviour laboured to instruct his disciples during the time of his life in the doctrine of his death; it leaked out of their minds, as if they believed nothing of his former declarations till the appearance of his person was an irrefragable testimony of the truth of his words. If our knowledge of God were more spiritual, the operations of our souls would be more heavenly. Whosoever knows him is still flying towards him. Creeping earth-worms, lukewarm Laodiceans, careless Gallios, conceited pharisees, know little, understand less, and savour nothing of God and Christ. Our ignorance of God is too great, because our estimations of God are too little.

To awaken us against a wilful and negligent ignorance, consider,

[1.] It is inconsistent with Christianity. He deserves not the name of a Christian who wants the necessary knowledge of a Christian. He deserves not the name of a rational and intelligent creature who neglects the employment of his mind about the most worthy object. Spiritual ignorance doth as much unchristian a man that hath the name of a Christian, as natural folly unmans a person who hath the shape of a reasonable creature. Should we call this a world if there were no sun, or a man a man that hath no eyes in his head, nor reason in his mind? It would be a shadow of the world, the ghost of a man. Christianity without knowledge is an appearance and nothing else, like the picture of a man without reason. A true Christian bewails Adam's loss, endeavours to repair it, to get a light restored to his mind, and a beauty to his soul. He approves of Adam's sin that sits contented in that darkness Adam brought upon himself and his posterity. Can that man be counted a follower of Christ, that is pleased with the plague of nature, which the light of the sun comes to scatter by his beams? Was any poor Egyptian at ease in the judicial darkness, were his groans silent, or his desires weak for the removal of it? Yet how many souls, capable of an inheritance of light, sport themselves in the thick fogs of spiritual ignorance! He hath a pagan heart, under a Christian name, that can talk of the design of the new Adam, and yet be pleased with the predominant darkness and nature of the old. It is against the end of the gospel; the promise concerning the gospel times is, that 'the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord,' Isa. xi. 9, not full of the ignorance of God. Light, not darkness, is the glory of a gospel state. The ignorance of the apostles in the

time of Christ concerning the nature of his mediation, the design and end of his death, is intolerable now in any that bear the name of Christians. That was before the death and resurrection of Christ, ours after the clear manifestation of that which in the time of his life was obscure to his disciples.

[2.] Ignorance is Satan's tool and chain, whereby he acts men and keeps them in captivity. He obstructs knowledge, and guides us in rebellion by ignorance. The knowledge of God opens the secrets of Satan's kingdom, and reveals the mystery of his government. It is the breaking out of the light of the glory of God in the gospel that makes him fall from heaven like lightning, Luke x. 18. None gratify Satan so much as ignorant persons. While this chain is upon the greatest mere moralist, he is as sure under the conduct of the devil as the profanest wretch. He can be content to let men please themselves with the shadows of virtue, while he can hold them sure by the chain of darkness. He knows he can lead anywhere those that want eyes to see their way. The darkness of the mind and the power of Satan are the same thing: Acts xxvi. 18, 'To turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.' Whosoever is possessed by the one is not free from the command of the other; darkness chains Satan to punishment, and darkness chains us to Satan. It is the devil's tool whereby he works in us; he makes a vast use of it in his motions in the world, and his assaults of the soul, Eph. vi. 12. He is called 'the ruler of the darkness of this world,' of the dark ignorant principles of this world. The darkness in the heart, whether total or partial, is the handle to every operation of his upon us; and the thicker, that is, the stronger second he hath to take his part in all his contests against our spiritual welfare. By our foolish principles, he makes work in our fiery passions. The more we understand of God's nature and Christ's offices, the more we shall be able to discern his subtlety, and prevent or withstand his attempts, Eph. vi. 14, 15, 17.

[3.] Ignorance of God is the cause of all sin in the world. This is the fountain of all the sin that ever was; of the first sin, 2 Cor. xi. 3. Those sins which are against knowledge of a particular precept, are grounded upon an ignorance of the nature of the Lawgiver. Sin springs from an error of imperfection in the understanding. If a false judgment be erected, false orders will be issued; innumerable evils, determinations in the will and errors in practice, will be the consequents; wrong notions of God will give birth to foul evils. A *vertigo* or megrim in the head causeth irregular and unsteady motions in the members. Hence it is that the Scripture gives the name of folly to sin, and fools to sinners. To forget God is the character of all wicked men: Ps. l. 22, 'Consider this, ye that forget God.' Sin grows from the root of folly. Why do men 'give themselves over to commit lasciviousness with greediness'? 'Because of the blindness of their hearts,' Eph. iv. 18, 19. Why did not the Sadducees believe the resurrection? Because they 'knew not the scriptures, and the power of God,' Mat. xxii. 29. Why are men corrupt in their ways? Because they 'say in their hearts, There is no God,' Ps. xiv. 1. Why did the ungrateful Israelites provoke God in the wilderness forty years of mercy together? Because 'they did err in their hearts, and did not know his ways,' Ps. xc. 10. Ignorance of the glory of God, the nature of sin, and the necessity of proper ways of expiation, was the cause of the greatest wickedness that ever was committed in the face of the sun. The Jews had framed a false notion of a carnally victorious and triumphant Messiah, that would make them conquerors of the world, and therefore crucified the Lord of glory. This fashions men to lust, 1 Peter i. 14. All wickedness flows out like a torrent,

Hosea iv. 1, 2 (he that doeth evil hath not seen God, 3 John 11), where there are false conceptions of God, or true notions of him misapplied. The motion will be irregular when men imagine a careless God or an impure God, that he doth not regard our ways, is patient, without anger, threatens only to scare, will not damn men to everlasting torment for a small crime, his anger endures not for ever; what will not a man do by those encouragements upon the invitation of a temptation? When the Gentiles' imaginations of God became vain, their practices quickly became abominable, Rom. i. 21, 24. Mistakes of God, and impudence in sin, hold one another by the hand. When the mind is corrupt and destitute of the truth, then break out strife, and envy, and railings, and all the black regiment of hell, 1 Tim. vi. 4, 5. No foundation in blindness for any regular walking. Hence it is that sins are called works of darkness, but (as some think) never darkness itself, for by that word in Scripture is signified error and ignorance. That which hath no being can have no operation, that which is not known can never move the conscience. If it be not known, it is so far a nonentity, a thing of no existence; a man can have no gracious operation, because without knowledge of God he can have no gracious being. It is not so much the pleasure of sin as the ignorance of God that preserves men's affections to vile lusts. Were the pleasures of sin, like Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, seven times hotter and more sparkling than they are, they could not detain them by their charms, if they had a prospect of the goodness, sweetness, and kindness of God. The beauty of this object would leave in them no spirit for the other. For when the soul knows God to be the chief good, and clearly apprehends him under that notion, all the chains of sin and Satan cannot draw him, nor the allurements of them woo him totally from him. But you may as soon cause an ass with his heavy limbs to run a race as swiftly as a stag, as cause an ignorant person to repent and come to Christ. You may as well find reason in a bat, as repentance and faith and spiritual thirst in an ignorant person. As this is the cause of all sin in the world, so the remainders of it is the cause of all the slips in the best of God's people, which cost them so many sad groans. As a total blindness endangers a fall into precipices, so a partial blindness exposeth to many stumbings in the way.

[4.] Wilful ignorance of God is damning. If the knowledge of God be eternal life, ignorance of God must be eternal death. Mere ignorance destroys as well as disobedience. Vengeance will be rendered on 'them that know not God,'—on heathens that had not a beam of the gospel, as well as on them 'that obey not the gospel' revealed to them, 2 Thes. i. 7, 8. If God hides his gospel from a man, it is a sign of a lost estate: 2 Cor. iv. 4, 'If the gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost;' much more when a man hides the gospel from himself, which is not only a neglect of God, but a contempt of grace. He affects his own damnation, as he affects darkness that shuts his eyes against the sun, and refuseth the benefit of the light. If it be damning where the true notions of God and Christ are not revealed, it is much more when the revelation of him is rejected or abused. There is so much of God manifested in his works as renders him in some measure intelligible, and God hath given them a faculty to know something of him, whereby their neglect renders them also inexcusable. How could a man be inexcusable that did not see the sun, if he had a negative inability to see it? God hath given as much light to men in his works as is due to an intellectual nature, and to this end, that men might be inexcusable (for so those words, Rom. i. 20, *so that they are without excuse*, might be more to the design of the apostle rendered), 'that they might be without excuse,' not noting the event of

their neglect, but the design of God's manifestation, that if they did neglect it, they should have no ground for an apology.

But where God hath over and above added out of grace a scriptural light, and made the glorious manifestations therein plain, and when the revelation is clearer than that in the creatures, clearer than that in the law, which was called night, in comparison of the knowledge in the gospel, which is called day (not that the one was absolutely dark, but in comparison of the other, as the night is not absolutely dark because there is a star-light, or some light in the sky, but much short of the light of the day), wilful ignorance under such opportunities of knowledge renders men more deplorable than heathens. Inexcusable is he that hath seen God riding in the chariot of the gospel, and the Sun of righteousness moving in the hemisphere of the word, and will not behold that sun by whose light he walks upon the earth, and performs his daily affairs. What can be answered when the question shall be put, How came you to be ignorant of those things which have so often been inculcated to you? ignorant of that God in whom you live and move? ignorant of that God that shines in every plant,* every motion of the heavens, and clothes himself with the robes of yet greater glory in his word? There lies as much an obligation upon us to the knowledge of God, as to universal obedience to God. We are bound to inquire after him, what he is, what we must do to please him, and how he will be worshipped. He therefore that is wilfully defective in inquiring after God, and searching into his will, hath no intent universally to obey him; if he had, he would take pains to know him, and what would please him, which is necessary to a state of salvation. We know what the fate of those is that have no intention of universal obedience. It speaks the heart set upon sin, and a fear of coming to be acquainted with anything that may hinder them from committing it. A man ignorant of God and Christ can no more recover out of his mortal disease, than a sick man can without the knowledge of an able physician, and the application of a sovereign remedy. It is only by the knowledge of Christ that we have justification from our guilt, Isa. liii. 11. No man can be freed from guilt by ignorance; to think to be saved by ignorance is the same as to imagine to live without a knowledge of food, and to be happy without acquaintance with the necessary means of happiness. That which is our sin can never be our apology; and being a gross sin, is so far from excusing, that it renders itself more grievous, and the condemnation more terrible. And though it be said that Paul 'obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly in unbelief,' 1 Tim. i. 13, it will give no comfort to those that are wilfully ignorant, unless they can prove that Paul was one of that rank; he did what he did ignorantly, because the gospel was never revealed to him till Christ revealed it from heaven. It is likely he was furious against the Christians by an implicit faith in the pharisees' determinations, as well as out of a zeal of the law. By the same reason that any would palliate their ignorance by this, and imagine a salvation because of that, they may fancy unbelief also to be a cause of obtaining mercy, which no man that owns the Scripture can have any pretence to.

To conclude, wilful ignorance of God and Christ under the gospel doth not procure a single damnation, but one with the most terrible circumstances, a condemning sentence with God's mock and laughter, turning his delight and compassions to a pleasure in his vengeance: Prov. i. 23, &c., 'Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and you

* Qu. 'planet'?—ED.

refused ; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ; but you have set at nought all my counsel ; I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.'

Use II. Is of comfort to those who have this saving knowledge of God. Is it not an high satisfaction to be in the light, while many others are in darkness, to have an acquaintance with the Creator and Redeemer, while others have a familiarity only with the devil ? As he that is ignorant of God is miserable, though skilled in all natural and moral knowledge, so he is transcendently happy who knows his Creator, though blockish in all the arts in the world. If he were possessed with as great a wisdom as Solomon, he could have no addition to his essential happiness. As the fruition of God in the end is the sole blessedness of a creature, so the knowledge of God is the sole means to blessedness, without anything else to piece it out. Christ in the text mentions nothing else in concomitancy with it, 'This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent ;' this and nothing else, this without anything besides. Such an one is in union with the highest truth, he hath a spring of spiritual life within him, a divine manna that nourisheth his soul to everlasting life. It is a comfort that God hath fixed the fitness of the soul to enjoy him, not in a natural strength of the understanding, but in an affectionate knowledge of him, a qualification all are capable of. If only wise men, and men eminent for speculation, were capacitated for eternal life, how few would God have to know him or enjoy him ! But the meanest man, that hath neither opportunity nor capacity for an elevated contemplation of God, may attain this spiritual knowledge and an elevation of affection to him.

1. Such an one knows more than all the carnal world besides. What the world knows of God is by a common illumination, as Christ is 'the light which enlighteneth every man that comes into the world,' and by the largeness of a natural capacity ; but what a Christian knows of God is by a divine infusion, strait union, by a particular act of God, making Christ wisdom to him, 1 Cor. i. 30. He knows him not only by a natural instinct as the world doth, and as beasts know their proper food and what is convenient for them, but by a special revelation, an inshining, a choice favour not indulged to every one : 'To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given,' Mat. xiii. 11, a gift out of his secret cabinet, not out of his common exchequer. How comfortable was it to the shepherds to have the revelation of the birth of Christ, which was concealed from the pharisees and grandees of the Jews ! God darts out a divine light upon whom he pleaseth, he refresheth babes with his beams, while he leaves the wise and prudent with their blind eyes in the dark. Poor fishermen had this privilege, which was denied to the towering philosophers of the world. And almost all the revelations of Christ there were among the heathens, were communicated to the weaker sex, some women called sybils, who had a prophetic spirit of those things. Some of their prophecies are true, though not all true which is inserted in their oracles ; they knew more than all the rest of the world. The eye is a little member, but it views at once the whole surface of heaven within its reach ; a little saving light from God gives a man a prospect of such glorious things, which reason cannot reach ; a little spiritual light, with the constant assistance of the Spirit, shall behold more of God than the biggest intellect without it, as a little eye with a multitude of sparkling spirits shall see further and clearer than a greater without that assistance. Many men of the deepest insight and quickest parts are furthest from the knowledge of God.

2. It is an evidence of grace to have a transforming, affectionate know-

ledge of God and Christ. No wicked man doth understand, Dan. xii. 10, *i. e.* experimentally, affectionately, transformingly. Ignorance is a sign of gracelessness, spiritual knowledge is a fruit of the Spirit, and a sign of all the other fruits of it; for it is a covenant mercy, and flows from God's being our God, and it is a fruit of the grace of God given us in Christ to be enriched with it, 1 Cor. i. 4, 5. The clearness of the church's eyes, like the fish-pools of Heshbon, in the apprehension of spiritual mysteries, is part of her beauty, in the summary description of it, Cant. vii. 4. The eyes are the organs of sight, and the instruments of knowledge which convey objects to the understanding. It is a sign of a man's being in covenant with God, to have an heart to know him, Jer. xxiv. 7. Heb. viii. 11, 'I will give them an heart to know me, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, I will put my law into their mind.' The great promise of the new covenant was, that they should know God better than under all the rudiments of the law; a knowing God by a law in the heart, as well as by a notion in the head; for the law written in the heart is a reason rendered why they should know God. He speaks not of a knowledge that lies in the common field, but a knowledge hedged in, and peculiar to the covenant children of God, the heirs of heaven, and brethren of one family, not to all that bear the name of Christians, for it is such a knowledge as is accompanied with sanctification of the heart, Heb. viii. 10, and justification of the person: ver. 12, 'For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more.' Where this knowledge is, it is a sign of the special favour of God; since it is a gift only in his power; (God doth not use so solemnly to promise that which is within our common reach), and is conveyed by a special act of the Spirit. It being a covenant mercy, it is a cabinet mercy. Men without it are in the chains of darkness and the devil; those that have it are freed from the devil's yoke. What a comfortable thing is it to be within the arms of the everlasting covenant! Where covenant graces are bestowed, all covenant blessings will of right follow.

(3.) What comfort may such have in all kind of afflictions? This, like musk, will perfume the most loathsome dungeon. We have enough if we have this spiritual knowledge of God, though we want all things else. Death cannot be dreadful when Christ is known and felt in the power of his grace. The view of Christ raised the heart of Stephen above fears and anguish, when stones were ready to break in pieces the case of his body: Acts vii. 55, 56, 'He saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.' This knowledge is the strongest cordial: the sweetness of this surmounts the bitterness of the other. When the sun is clearly seen, the high winds do rarely trouble the mariner. In death, we need the greatest supports, and what greater than to consider you are going to one you know? Though you change your place, yet not your acquaintance; you pass to a strange country, but not to new company. And indeed, afflictions are so far from being ground of discomforts, that they are rather cordials in the issue, because they advance us more degrees in this knowledge, which is the means of eternal life. We often learn more of God under the rod that strikes us, than under the staff that comforts us: Ps. cxix. 71, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes. The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.' If the sun should perpetually shine in our hemisphere, how could we understand God's workmanship in those little spangles of the heavens? Though the night hide from us the beauty of the sun, yet it discovers the brightness and motions of the stars. God had not at all been discovered to us without the

bleeding afflictions of Christ; nor is not fully learned of us without our own. Daniel was in captivity, when he had the most perspicuous visions of Christ; John in exile in Patmos, when he had the revelation of Christ's walk among the candlesticks, and the methods of God in the affairs of the church. And Paul mounts up in choicer apprehensions of spiritual objects, as upon eagle's wings, in his epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, which were writ when he was in bonds at Rome for Christ, wherein appears an higher flight, a stronger ardour, a more divine efficacy of Spirit in him. This spiritual knowledge of God and Christ prepares us for afflictions, comforts us in them, and is enlarged by them.

(4.) Comfort in the measures and degrees of knowledge. It is eternal life to know God and Jesus Christ; Christ regards the quality, not the quantity. The disciples, who were present with Christ in this prayer, and of whom he acquaints his Father that they had known him, had but little knowledge, yet it was true and sound, though not in such great measures as afterwards. Not that this should be encouragement to laziness; for the small measures in them before the death of Christ are inexcusable now, under greater means than they had before the coming of the Spirit upon them after the Redeemer's death and resurrection. All believers have not the same measure of knowledge, yet all have the truth of it; there are degrees of knowledge, as there are of grace; God distributes the knowledge of himself according to the nature of the several subjects, as the sun doth light to the stars according to their several capacities. All the apostles, in the time of Christ's being in the world, had not the same measure and clearness of insight. Peter confesseth him to be the Son of God when the rest were silent; and none after seems to have the knowledge of Christ and his mysteries in the same elevation with Paul, yet all had a sufficiency of knowledge, both for themselves and others. Nay, believers themselves have not at all times the same sparkling measures of light: as the sun shines clearer in some parts of the day than in others, yet in every part of the day there is light enough for men to perform their affairs by. Look to the quality of your knowledge, that it be sound, spiritual, transforming, as well as to the quantity. See what favour attends it, what affections it engenders; not what speculations it raiseth. A great heat with a little light is better than a clear light with an hard frost and benumbed limbs. The spiritual eye, as well as the natural, is opened by degrees. Bless God for what you find; rest not in twilight, but long for stronger beams. Look to God for light: Ps. xxxiv. 5, 'They looked to him, and were lightened.' Look not to Moses and the prophets, but as the means; look to Christ, who is the light that enlightens every man that comes into the world. The more casts of our eye upon him by faith, the fuller of beams shall we take them off. A look towards him attracts light from him, a look towards the sun clears all things about us.

(5.) And let me add, that it is the office of Christ in heaven to pity us and relieve us in our bewailed ignorance. He that prayed thus, and asserts the knowledge of God and of himself to be eternal life, is ordained by God an high priest, to 'have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way,' Heb. v. 1, 2. As he pities his people under the remainders of sin, so under the remainders of darkness, the cause of the other. It is one of the greatest troubles of a gracious soul, that he knows no clearer; and the mediator's strongest compassions are exercised about that which is his people's urgent distress. What hath Christ compassions for, but to exert upon their greatest perplexity? What use were they for, if the proper object of them be neglected? He hath all his offices to remove the fruits of our fall. The darkness of the mind was the first, and the cause of all the

mischiefs since. If the crazed understanding be not cured, no saving work can have its full effect. This being the root of our misery, is the first proper object of our Saviour's compassions. His compassions are his qualification for every office; were he not compassionate, his royalty would rather be a tyranny, his priesthood an empty title, his prophetic office an idle name. As he pleads against the guilt of sin, which as a priest he hath expiated; as he pleads against the power of sin, which as a king he hath broken; so he pleads against the remaining ignorance of the soul, which as a prophet he is expelling. As it was his business at the first to declare God, so it is still his employment more fully to discover him. As he owns the gift of his Father's power in the text to spread this knowledge, so he promiseth in the same prayer to be faithful in his office: John xvii. 26, 'I have declared thy name, and will declare it.' He was the light of men, not only at his incarnation, but before; no age or period of time was there wherein he scattered not some illumination in the world. He 'was the light of men,' John i. 4, and 'lighted every man that came into the world,' ver. 9; nor is less pitiful to men's ignorance, and industrious to remove the continuing shadows in the hearts of his people, than he was before. As he is the author of their knowledge as well as their faith, so he will be the finisher of the one as well as the other. He is a Sun of righteousness, and is to do spiritually what the sun doth naturally, send forth his light to disperse the darkness, and his influence to heal the barrenness of the soul. The natural sun, indeed, pierceth by its influence the obscure bowels of the earth, which, by reason of their thickness, obstruct the entrance of his beams; but the Sun of righteousness bestows not his influence without his light. He is first a prophet to enlighten, before he is a Spirit to quicken, in the first work. He is the same in the progress; as we cannot have spiritual life before light, so we cannot have an increase of spiritual life without an increase of spiritual light; and to this purpose he took our nature, that he might pity and remove our darkness. Is not this a comfort, to have the glass of his word below, wherein to see him; a Spirit within, to wipe and clear our eyes; and an high priest above, to exercise his compassions towards us upon this very account?

(6.) The saving knowledge of God any have, is an evidence of a future state, of a happy vision, and an earnest of their arrival to it. Since it is the means of eternal life, there must be an eternal life, the issue of this knowledge. Of what use are means that are without an end? Since nothing can satisfy the soul here, nor can our souls with a perfect contentment know God through the grates and lattices of a dark body, with the scales and shades upon the mind, there must be a time wherein a glorious liberty from prison shall be conferred, Rom. viii. 21, the shadows fly away, and a contenting vision be bestowed upon a longing heart; otherwise the soul could not have an happy and satisfactory eternal life. Not to have such a knowledge as to satisfy the full desires, would be half an eternal death; not answering the vastness of the power the Father bestowed upon the Son for the conferring it, nor answering the compassions of the Son to the ignorant in removing the hindrances. Besides, the more knowledge there is here, the hotter the thirst for more. As God is the author of those sparks we have, so he is the author of that heat which ariseth in the soul by those sparks. It cannot be supposed that a God of infinite goodness, who created man for the fruition of himself, and after he was dead in sin revived him, and planted in him quick and ardent desires for himself, should do this without designing a full satisfaction to him, which never any of the choicest spirits had in this world, and therefore must be in another. Where do you find any blessed soul at rest

here? David is still upon pursuit after a sight of the glory of God; Paul still reacheth forward to the things before, and breathes after a full apprehension, putting up petitions for all whom he had the care of and affection to, that they might be enriched with all knowledge, understand the riches of glory, be filled with all wisdom. Doth it consist with such a watchful, sincere, and unspotted goodness of God, to raise and continue such inclinations in his creatures, to encourage and influence them, and never to render them completely satisfied? Shall God thus let any soul that hath had a glimpse of him lie grovelling and panting, without reaching out his hand to lift him up, and unveiling his face in time to him to behold his glory? Annihilation had been better than boundless desires, eternally unsatisfied, and eternally languishing. The understanding, the noblest faculty, first seized upon by God, will not always want the noblest contentment in the view of its proper object. The sun communicates not itself to the air, but by the enlightening of it. God is the father of glory as well as of grace, and is a father of grace in order to his being a father of glory. God doth not design to mock his creatures, or to defeat the desires of his own exciting. It is in point of knowledge as well as other things that God is our God, Jer. xxiv. 7. He will one day be our God in the highest perfection of all the fruits of the covenant, so that ignorance as well as sin and infirmity shall be chased far from us. The covenant will want its full accomplishment till the dim knowledge of God be drowned in a perfect and clear vision. And since the shadowy light we have is so delightful, how ravishing must that be which shall discover God in his full glory! If the earnest be so pleasing, how delightful shall be the full payment, since an earnest is the least part of the sum contracted for!

(7.) Where God doth communicate the knowledge of himself and his Son, he will not hide from gracious souls any other knowledge necessary for them in the world. The giving the greater is an assurance the less shall not be withheld, which may further them in that which is the principal end. Yea, he sometimes reveals his secret purposes to them concerning his transactions in the world. God would not conceal from Abraham his determination concerning Sodom, because he had been acquainted with the grand secret of his mercy in the Messiah: Gen. xviii. 17, 18, 'Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do, seeing that all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?' Have I manifested my gracious purpose to restore mankind to my favour, and the means how I will do it, which the heart of man could never think of, and so many hundred years are to run out before it be accomplished, and shall I make a difficulty to acquaint him with my intended judgment upon Sodom? God often gives those that know him a sense and sight of judgments he intends to bring upon a people: 'Who is wise, and he shall understand those things?' Hosea xiv. 9. Both the threatenings and promises contained in that prophecy.

III. Use. Of exhortation.

1. Try yourselves whether you have the knowledge of God or no; try it not so much by the notions you have of God and his truth as by the operations of it, and the draught of the perfections of God in your own souls. The greatest heads have often had the worst hearts. Christ had not more desperate enemies in the whole world than the intelligent pharisees, the Jewish doctors, who had the law at their fingers' ends. See whether we have a transcript of God and Christ in our own souls. When we cast our eyes upon God, let us reflect upon ourselves, and see whether the temper of our hearts answer the notions in our heads. Can any man say, I know God to be merciful, and I have an imitation of it; God is holy, and I have a draught

of it; God is omniscient, and I have a deep sense of it in my actions; God hath a sovereign dominion, and I have an obedient frame; God is true in his word, and I have a sincerity answering to divine truth, a faith in his promises, a fear of his threatenings; there are some lineaments in my heart answering in some measure to the perfections of my Creator? And can any man consider Christ as obedient to the will of God, and see a conformity in himself to that heavenly image? I know Christ felt the sting of death for sin, and I feel the power of that death breaking my sin, and sinful heart; Christ had an happy resurrection, and I feel the blessed fruit and influence of it, in raising my soul to a newness of life. This is only the true knowledge of God and Christ, which sinks down in affection, and expresseth itself in imitation. Conclude not of yourselves by some fleshly apprehensions of some pleasing doctrine of Christianity, as notions of the mercy of God, justification by Christ, freeness of grace. An intent speculation of such things may force men into a rapture by the strength of a sprightly imagination, without the inward living spirit of him in the heart. This is such a knowledge as the crazed fancy of a madman may have of wealth and palaces, who hath neither a penny in his purse nor a house for his head. The trial of ourselves is by a thirst for the performing of the will of God, a motion in his ways, sense of his greatness, embraces of his grace and dictates, and spiritual affections to himself and his laws. There is as vast a difference between the knowledge of God in the letter and that in the spirit, as there is between the statue of an angel with his wings and a real angel in heaven. A knowledge in the head is as money in the purse, a knowledge in the heart is as money for our use. Nor let us conclude by the delight we have in speculations. There is a secret joy in the contemplation of any truth of a lower size, much more in the speculation of the highest, noblest, and firmest truth. The notion may be delightful when a conformity is unpleasant. We may affect the accomplishment of our minds without any endeavouring to better our hearts. Speculation is an employment of wit, but the spiritual knowledge is a conjunction of heart to God and Christ. We may value a meditation of him when the conformity to him may be of as little esteem with us as the straw and dirt we tread under our feet. The understanding and will are two distinct faculties, have distinct operations; the acting of the one doth not always infer the acting of the other. We may delight to look upon that we would not feed on, yet true knowledge is always attended with a delight: 'When wisdom enters into thy heart, and knowledge is pleasant to thy soul,' Prov. ii. 10; the more innate light there is in the eye, the more the eye delights in the beams which from without strike upon it; the more darkness in the eye, the less pleasure in the sunshine. He that loves his lusts, hates the light which discovers their ugliness; he that loves God, loves the light which discovers his beauty. True knowledge is always accompanied with more ardent desires to know. One ignorant of God desires not to know him, that he may sin with the less rebuke and perish with the less fear. It is a sign the soul hath tasted of divine sweetness, when it longs for greater communications; it is so far from assuaging, that it quickens the appetite. Moses was master of the Egyptian learning, but set not up his rest in that. He had more acquaintance with God than any man in the world; yet, after he had been discoursing with God in the mount, he is an earnest petitioner for more discoveries: Exod. xxxiii. 13, 'I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.' That is no true knowledge of God that surfeits and clogs the soul. Those heavy spirits, that are scarce masters of a groan for it, never understood the excellency of it. Not to desire to know him is to contemn him, and he that undervalues him never had any understanding of him.

2. Rest not in a discursive understanding of God. The understanding in a state of innocency, with its full stock, did not preserve the will from a destructive obedience to the sensitive appetite, when it was wholly freed from those ill biasses which make its motions irregular now. Mere knowledge now cannot be forcible enough to prevail with the will under the power of those ill habits, which imperiously tyrannise over it. The eye and hand of a man can never cast a bowl right, which hath a false bias disproportioned to the aim of him that useth it; the reason of the caster cannot make it move, but according to its false bias. Till the wrong inclination of the will be displaced, it will not come under the guidance of the understanding, though it were as strongly enlightened as the highest angel. It will move according to its natural impetus and habit, notwithstanding all that light in the mind, as self-will acts the devil against God, contrary to all the light in his understanding. No intellectual act, abstractedly considered, can be a gracious action; all acts in the understanding receive their gracefulness and beauty by the termination of them in a God-like act of the will, which is the proper seat of grace. We come to enjoy God, not only by an act of our understanding, but by an act of our will. A glorified saint, no, nor the human nature of Christ, is not happy so much by a prospect of God, as by an intense affection to him. God stands not so much upon our knowledge of him, as our delight in him; and it is no sign of our union with God, unless affection to him be joined with it. All rational creatures affect knowledge in order to some good; the desires of good are more settled, and are more the fruits of a natural instinct than desires for knowledge. This, therefore, cannot give a complete satisfaction without a taste of his goodness. If we desire knowledge only for the sake of knowledge, we thwart the nature and natural motions of our souls. It is not the perfection of the understanding, without the purity of the heart, which brings us to enjoy God, Mat. v. 8. Impure creatures, with the highest intellectuals, cannot look upon him. The glory of Christ was to do the will of God; his knowledge of him was in order to obey him. Get a fresher experience, therefore, of every truth of God which you know; this is the ballast of the soul; the other is but a vanishing sound. Improve your knowledge. In knowing God, we receive only from him; in loving him, we give ourselves and all that we have to him, and God bestows himself rather upon them that love him, than upon those that only know him.* As it is worse to hate God than to be ignorant of him, so it is better to love God than merely to understand him. We may use our speculations to pride, but we cannot make ill use of our holy affections. By loving, we make a larger progress in a little time. Love doth more firmly knit us to God than knowledge, for the strength of knowledge consists in discerning, the strength of love in union. By contemplating God, we contract, as it were, his infiniteness according to the capacity of our conceptions; by loving him, we enlarge our minds to the immense latitude of his divine goodness. By knowing him, we do, as it were, bring him down to us; by loving him, we lift up ourselves to him. We know only so much as we can receive and are capable of, but we love not only what we see, but what we imagine there is of goodness beyond our sight. We see the divine excellency obscurely, but we may love it intensely; we see little, but we may love much. Knowledge gives us a sight, and love gives us a possession; we find him by knowledge, but we enjoy him by love. Let us improve our knowledge of him for inflaming our affections to him, that we may be prepared for the glory of our eternal life. The understanding is but the door of the

* Ficin. lib. i. epist. 116, pp. 663, 664.

heart; to let God and Christ stick there, and not bring them into the heart, is to give a cold entertainment to that which deserves the best.

3. Prepare, and wait, and long for heaven. We have but a glimpse here of the excellency of God and beauty of Christ. The church's eyes, though clear as doves, are 'within her locks,' Cant. iv. 1; a fair eye of faith, but still some obstructions to a full sight. The light now shines in a dark place, it shall shine there without a spot of darkness; that which is in part shall give place to that which is perfect; the light of God shall dart immediately upon the soul without reflection from a glass; all shall meet in the 'unity of the knowledge of the Son of God,' as well as in the 'unity of faith,' Eph. iv. 13. The motions of the body shall not obstruct the operations of the soul. There will be light without darkness, knowledge without ignorance, clearness without dimness; no turbulent affections shall confound the eye, nor distractions divert the soul. 'We shall know as we are known,' 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Every gracious soul is perfectly known by God here, *i. e.* accepted by him, but is not fully illuminated by him; but there will be as perfect an illumination from him, as there is an acceptance with him. The thick scales shall for ever fall off from the eye, and the dark veil from the heart, that it may behold without weakness and winking. As the most excellent object shall be presented, so it shall be beheld in the most excellent manner; the spiritual eye shall be fortified, and the divine glory shall be unclouded, and the pleasure of seeing shall be as great as that of enjoying. The clearest knowledge here is unconceivably short of that above, as the sight of a sore eye is of that of an eagle. The chains of spiritual sloth shall be knocked off, the diversions of worldly objects shall have an eternal remove. Ignorance within shall perish, and darkness without shall vanish. Here the soul sees what God is not, there it shall see him as he is to be seen. Surely those that thirst not for this state, that prepare not themselves for it, that long not for the passing away of those gloomy shades, that they may satisfy themselves with full visions and full affections, and according to their measures prepare themselves by diligent inquiries and affectionate motions, never yet had any taste of the most desirable object.

4. Therefore daily endeavour to increase in the knowledge of God. Our main work in the world is to increase in the knowledge of sin, that we may more vehemently detest it; and the knowledge of God, that we may more closely embrace him and resign up ourselves to him. Paul, who was advanced to a higher step in this than any in the world, had taken up a settled resolution to 'know nothing but Christ and him crucified,' as the most excellent knowledge he could busy himself in, 1 Cor. ii. 2, and would neglect no means to grow up in the apprehensions of him 'of whom he was apprehended,' Philip. iii. 12. It is not said we must follow on to know for such a time, Hos. vi. 3. No time is fixed, and therefore it must be continually. We should quicken any divine spark in our souls.* If the first beams of spiritual light give life, the further increase more abundantly increaseth that life; it being eternal life, we are nearest to life when we rise highest in knowledge. If the mind be opened, it can no more take pleasure in a little knowledge than the eye of the body can in a little light, by which it delights itself in any visible object. It can take no pleasure in a little, but as it is a presage of more approaching. He therefore that saith he knows as much of God and Christ as can be known, never understood the depth of his own natural ignorance, the immensity of God, the dimensions of the love of Christ, and the nature and unweariedness of the Spirit's teaching. Should all men in the

* As Jamblichus speaks of Pythagoras, he did ἀναζωπυρεῖν τὸ θείον, Vit. Pythag. lib. i. cap. 16.

world engage in no other study but this of God and Christ, to the world's end, they would confess that that which they know is unconceivably short of that which they are ignorant of. It cannot be so great but it is still capable of a further increase, like a river that is not so big but it may swell higher, and larger, by the admission of lesser rivulets. There is a ripe age, a manly stature in understanding, which we must aim at: 1 Cor. xiv. 20, 'Be not children in understanding.' The apostle, who had the fullest insight into the nature of God and offices of Christ, puts himself into the number of them that knew but in part: 1 Cor. xiii. 12, 'I know but in part.' And therefore, as we desire to be as angels in glory, we should endeavour to imitate the angels in their acute search into the mysteries of Christ, and wisdom of God in him;* they know much, yet desire to know more, 1 Pet. i. 12. The truth is, as Adam offended in endeavouring to know more than he should, we offend in neglecting to know so much as we may. Our first parents would know too much, and their children too little, though there be 'unsearchable riches of Christ' to be searched into, Eph. iii. 8.

(1.) There can be no growth in grace without an increase in the knowledge of God. God is the object of grace, the object must be known before any act about it can be exercised; and as the object is cleared, the acts about it are more vigorous. There may be indeed a knowledge without grace; but there can be no increase of grace without an increase of knowledge, as the heat of the fire cannot be made more intense without a supply of fuel. There may be slight affections up and down, roving, like those of a ship without ballast tossed by the waves, but making no way. Knowledge hath faith in its root, and all other graces for its fruit: 2 Peter i. 5-7, 'Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge;' then follows temperance, patience, godliness, charity. As the root is strengthened, the branch spreads itself, and the fruits grow thicker. The knowledge of the word is the entrance of life, the means of begetting is the means of nourishing the soul to eternal life. If the stock decays, the fruits which grow from it cannot flourish. The increase of it was as much the subject of the apostle's prayer for the Colossians, as the first fulness of it in them, and that with respect to their fruitfulness, which depended on it: Col. i. 9, 10, 'We cease not to pray for you, and to desire that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work;' and as a means to it he adds, 'increasing in the knowledge of God.'

(2.) It is not likely there can be any other fruit than that of apostasy, without increasing in the knowledge of God. If knowledge be not improved, it will decay. 'Evil men wax worse and worse,' 2 Tim. iii. 13. As some lust is the cause why men desire not the rudiments of knowledge, so some lust is the cause why men desire not the improvement of knowledge, and this will be like a thief in the candle of the Lord, making it sweat away, like a deluge of water extinguishing the fire. If God opens the floodgate of corrupt affections, the flood will quench those sparks which seemed to be spiritual, as well as it did those natural sparks in those the apostle speaks of, Rom. i. 26. The ground that is bad of itself, when overflowed with salt waters, is much worse, and cannot bring forth what it did before. A stop in knowledge, though a man be acquainted with the first principles, is the first inlet to apostasy, according to the apostle's intimation, Heb. vi. 1, 2. After he had checked them in the former chapter, for sticking in the first principles of Christianity, and exhorted them in this chapter to proceed further

* Eph. iii. 10, *ἡκρίσται εἰς τὰ βάθη τῆς θείας γνώσεως*. Clem. Alexandr. Barlow on Tim. part ii. p. 51.

in the knowledge of the mysteries of religion, he immediately subjoins the doctrine of apostasy; 'For it is impossible for those that were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift,' &c., ver. 4. If you grow not to a greater maturity in knowledge, you are in danger of returning, not only to your former ignorance, but more corrupt affections. If they took up their station in the first principles, they could not pass on to perfection, and this is an evidence that they were going back, and distasting those first rudiments which they had learned and embraced. This is evident in natural and civil affairs: the tree that doth not thrive will soon rot, and the tradesman that doth not increase his stock will soon be out at heels, and he that doth not improve his knowledge will prove a spiritual bankrupt. And such a wilful darkness which men bring upon themselves by their perversity, is but one step from destruction. The plague of darkness upon the Egyptians did immediately precede the slaying of their first born, and the destruction of the flower of their militia in the Red Sea. Increase, therefore, in the knowledge of God is the way to prevent backslidings. Weak bodies soon stumble, when strong bodies walk and do not faint, but hold out to the last. To increase in affections is to increase in heat and vigour, to increase in spiritual understanding is to increase in strength, which consists in a compactness and closeness of the joints, which is the strength, health, and stability of the body. A river enlarged by the entertainment of many little streams is not dried up so soon as a small stream.

(3.) Every degree of increased knowledge will be more satisfying and ravishing. As it was in the feast where Christ was, the best wine was reserved for the end of it, the knowledge of God behind is to that which we have, as a full draught of precious liquor is to a taste or sip. The clearer our light, the stronger our comfort. All doubts arise from the weakness of judgment, ignorance of the nature of God, the offices of Christ, and tenure of the covenant. This is promised: Hosea vi. 3, 'We shall know, we shall follow on to know the Lord,' *i. e.* according to the Hebrew idiom, we shall knowingly follow on after the knowledge of God, or go from knowledge to knowledge. We shall have his assistance, who is prepared and ready to break out upon us as a morning light, refreshing and growing stronger every hour, with new manifestations and a lively heat; and like a former and latter rain, as fresh showers in the spring to draw out the flowers and beauty of the earth, and the latter rain in autumn to ripen to an harvest. By *rain* in Scripture is signified knowledge: Deut xxxii. 2, 'My doctrine shall drop as the rain.' The first beam is admirable, it is a marvellous light, 1 Peter ii. 9. It discovers things worthy the search, and is more surprising upon every inquiry. God and Christ are infinite treasures, inexhaustible fountains, a mine which upon every search presents with new riches. God always remains intelligible, and upon a faithful search will every day tear off part of the veil from the heart, and part of the veil from his own face, and send forth richer influences of life and joy.

Well, then, let us increase in this knowledge.

[1.] Let us endeavour to enlarge our faculty. Eye-salve is to be procured to make us quick-sighted, Rev. iii. 18. The mouth opened wide is filled with nourishing food; the eyes opened are filled with visible objects: Ps. cxix. 18, 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.' He hath an enlightened understanding, but sensible of his imperfection, longeth for a greater enlargedness, that he might see more ravishing wonders in God's law. Much more surprising wonders are there in God the law-maker, and Christ the law-repairer.

[2.] Let us not be puffed up with a vain conceit that we have knowledge

enough. Let us rather bewail our ignorance than boast of our understanding. Sense of indigence is the first step to fulness; empty souls are capable of being filled. What we know of God and Christ is infinitely below what is to be known of them.

[3.] Let us rise to more spiritual apprehensions. It is hard for us to have elevated thoughts; carnal notions are most apt to possess our minds, and naturally our thoughts of God and Christ are no better in their kind than Nicodemus's of regeneration, imagining it to be a re-entry into his mother's womb, John iii. 4; or the Samaritan woman, who framed no higher conceptions of the fountain of living waters than those she had of her father Jacob's well, John iv. 12. There is a knowledge of Christ after the flesh, 2 Cor. v. 16, carnal conceptions of divine glories; and there is a knowledge of Christ after the Spirit, in his spiritual appearances, his spiritual works; a knowledge of Christ, not so much as he was conversant upon earth, but as reigning in heaven, glorious and prevalent in his intercession. This was the end of his death, and this should be the aim of our knowledge. As Christ rose from a low and infirm state to an heavenly glory, to a more spiritual discovery of himself, so should we keep time with his several states in our knowledge of him. There is a knowledge of the history of Christ, and there is a knowledge of the mystery of Christ; this latter we should grow in, which is the true manna of the soul. Rise from dull notions to sprightly and more affecting apprehensions of God and Christ.

[4.] Let us increase in the knowledge of whole God and whole Christ. View all the perfections of God. Be not only intent upon some of the first magnitude, but on those that seem the lesser sparks, which have an influence one time or other upon the souls and lives of men. He is not worthy of the name of an astronomer, who gazeth only upon one or two planets, with a neglect of the rest, which have their particular excellency as well as the other heavenly bodies. As there is nothing in the heavens, so there is nothing in God and Christ, but is worthy of our understanding and consideration, and affords matter of instruction and matter of consolation one time or other. Let us not satisfy ourselves with a knowledge of God in the mass; a glance upon a picture never directs you to the discerning the worth and art of it.

[5.] Let us fetch the increase of this knowledge from the true principle, from the word. By the Spirit in the word it was first imprinted; by the Spirit in the word it is further enlarged. The improvement of a man in any science must be fetched from the principles of that science, not from the principles of another; no one would study the art of painting to improve himself in the skill of physic and medicines. Studying the word of God is the way to increase in the knowledge of God's nature, Christ's offices, and more spiritual apprehension of them.

5. Exhortation. To those who are void of the spiritual knowledge of God, labour for it. What need there be more urged than the title of it in the text? It is eternal life, therefore worthy of the most exact diligence. As the deception which had seized upon the understanding of the first man was the cause of death, so the light of understanding our Creator and his immense love in Christ, is the cause of life. Other sciences may be a tree of knowledge, this is a tree of life. It is a doleful consideration to see men impertinently spending their time and consuming their strength in the study of creatures (with a neglect of this), a knowledge wherewith they may descend to hell with sorrow, rather than that whereby they may ascend to heaven with joy. This knowledge, as it advanceth our states, so it elevates our natures. 'A man that understands not is like the beasts that perish,' Ps.

xlix. 20. Divine knowledge is above all the wisdom of corrupted nature, and renders a man superior to a mere son of Adam. All other knowledge, though commendable in its kind, if it be not improved for this end, will degenerate into sensual, if not devilish, James iii. 15. It will either rest in a more refined sensuality, a life of depraved reason, or fit a man to be a malicious devil against the interest of Christ. Shall not then eternal death scare us from our slothful and beloved ignorance? Shall not eternal life allure us to divine wisdom? Was it the misery of the world ever since Adam to have a blindness of mind? And shall any of us rest contented in that misery, and resolve to be no wiser and happier than the Gentiles, that were alienated from the life of God through the blindness of their minds? God said of light at the creation, it was good; he was the author of it, it entered into the composition of all creatures. He doth not say so of darkness; that is not his creature, but a privation of light. God never said of ignorance, or of any thing understood by darkness, It is good. Shall any of us resolve to persist in that which hath not the least spark of goodness in it, that hath not the least syllable of God's approbation, that is the foundation of all the contempt of God in the world? Who ever knew him but blessed themselves in that knowledge, were loath to part with it, valued it above the world? Who ever knew God clearly but loved him ardently, stuck to him closely, fell before him humbly, found rest and satisfaction in him? And shall not the experiences of those vast numbers who have had a saving glimpse of him, give us one lift from our heavy ignorance? Paul was no blockhead, being brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, a learned pharisee. Nor would the high priest and his companions have appointed a dull person commissioner against the Christians; yet all the knowledge he had before his acquaintance with Christ, and all the time and pains he had spent in it, he counts but loss in comparison of this, Philip. iii. 8. And the best petition he thought he could put up for the Ephesians was, that they might have 'the spirit of wisdom in the knowledge of him,' Eph. i. 17.

Motives.

1. Is not the object excellent? Ps. viii. 1, 'How excellent is thy name in all the earth, who hast set thy glory above the heavens!' Do we conceive God full of wisdom, goodness, righteousness, tenderness, and compassion? Can we imagine such a being, clothed with those unchangeable perfections, the original of all that goodness which is in any creature, the author of the beauty of the world? Can we, I say, pretend to believe there is such a being, and sit at rest in our ignorance of him? Shall we pretend to believe there is a Redeemer, who descended from the throne of majesty to the vale of misery, took our flesh when he had no need of it, stooped to the infirmities of our nature, and was full of no other design than a thirst for our welfare, carried himself with all sweetness and tenderness in the world, was the exact image of his Father; and have no desire to make more exact inquiries after him, that we may understand what he is? Is not God the Father of lights, the supreme truth, the most delectable object both of the human nature of Christ, the happy angels, and glorified saints? Is he not light without darkness, love without unkindness, goodness without evil, purity without filth, all excellency to please, without a spot to distaste? Are not all other things infinitely short of him, more below him than a cab of dung is below the glory of the sun? And is it not a sacrilege to steal our understandings from so excellent an object as the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent? Shall we know creatures and not our Creator? Shall we be inquisitive after the nature of plants, beasts, worms, and flies, and not be acquainted with the excellent author of our souls, who gave us

our knowing faculties? In whose service should our rational powers be employed, but in the discovery of the author of them? If the object be more glorious than the whole scheme of nature, the knowledge of this object must be also excellent, for as actions, so knowledge, is specified from the object.

(2.) Are not the great works God and Christ have done for us sufficient allurements? Are we not his creatures, and shall we not know our Creator? Are we not his offending creatures, and shall we not know our forbearer? May we not be his repaired creatures from the ruins of our fall, and shall we not know our Redeemer? Shall we not know that God whose image we bear, whose mercy we enjoy, in whom we live, move, and retain our beings? Shall we not know him by whose death we may live, by whose blood we may be beautified, by whose resurrection and ascension we may be dignified? Shall we be in a capacity to enjoy all those benefits, and be willingly ignorant of our benefactor? Without a knowledge of him who hath atoned our sins, and purchased that heaven we had forfeited, instead of that hell we had a thousand times deserved, how can we be thankful to him for what he hath done? What shame should cover our faces, what anguish should gnaw our souls, for our spiritual sloth and ingratitude! Is not God love—love in all his ways and methods? And are our hearts so out of love with him as to neglect inquiries after him? To what end doth he extend his open hands, but that we might 'seek the Lord'? Acts xvii. 25, 27; and is an unthankful ignorance of him a worthy requital? It is not enough that we know there is a God and a Redeemer, but we must know what they are, what they have done, what glories there are in their natures, in their actions; that is the import of the text, 'to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' Not only to know thy being, but thy excellency; not only to know that Christ is sent, but to know what that Christ is who is sent. Redemption was not for the blessed angels, yet they 'earnestly desire to look into' those things, 1 Peter i. 12. Christ is more a benefactor to us than to them in regard of redemption. Why then should their industry in searching be more than ours? It is not commendable, it is not lawful to be ignorant of him, who darts his heavenly beams upon our senses in the works of nature, and upon our souls in the works of grace. No greater injustice, no greater impiety, than to contemn or neglect the knowledge of that God whose image we are.

(3.) Hereby only we can satisfy our natural thirst for knowledge. The desire for knowledge is the peculiar property of man. His being rational differenceth him from all creatures. No creature seeks a redemption from ignorance but man. Brute animals rest contented in their ignorance; and for man to rest contented in his, is to be as bad or worse than a beast, to neglect the proper object of knowledge, to know those things which are as good as nothing. It is more suitable to the nature of man to take pleasure in the search after truth, than for mighty men to triumph in the conquests of countries. There is in man a greater ambition for knowledge than for anything else. No reproach doth more perplex him than to be counted foolish. Nor doth any man with any pleasure confess his ignorance, because ignorance belongs not to the original nature of man. As the nature of the will, by the law of creation, cannot be satisfied with a flashy and drossy good, till it mount to that which is pure and refined, and, after the enjoyment of an inferior good, is still putting the question, 'Who will shew us any good?' Ps. iv. 6, so the nature of the understanding pursues after the causes of things, and cannot rest till it come to the fountain-cause of all the rest, that hath no cause of itself. When any good is presented to the will, the next question

naturally is, Is there no higher good than this? So when a truth is presented to the understanding, the next question is, 'Is there no higher truth than this?' The will can only be satisfied with that good which is not exceeded by any other, and the understanding with that truth which is not excelled by any other. By this knowledge we are speaking of, our natural thirst is delightfully satisfied and increased; the soul is pleased with what it attains, and enlarged for what it wants. There is an uncertainty and doubtfulness in all other knowledge but this. Is there anything we think we know but may be battered by others' contradictions? Have we not often doubtful thoughts of that one day which we thought we clearly knew the day before? Do we not often quarrel with ourselves, and call that our dotage which a few days before we thought our glory; and question those sentiments which a few hours before we thought unquestionable, and as certain as the daily motions of the sun in the heavens? But here the foundation is unshaken: a God there is, and a God of infinite perfections; a Redeemer there is, and one of infinite tenderness. The knowledge of him by the word is certain, like the knowledge of a sunbeam. Here we may drink full draughts to quench our natural thirst after knowledge, since all things are best and surest known in their principle; and the mind of man is restless, like the needle in the compass, not to be established without a look to the highest truth. We are here sure of a mine, and the fruit of attaining will recompense the pains of inquiring. Let us therefore be so generous as to believe this natural thirst cannot be better satisfied than by knowing God and Christ, the most amiable objects; and let us never continue in that ignorance, which, if we observe our natural desires, we should account our shame; for if there be any satisfaction to the soul (which of all creatures under heaven approacheth in its nature nearest to the nature of God, and seems to be boundless in its operations), it must be in the understanding that which is infinite; and that it is neither heaven nor the company of angels, but God and Christ, who have an infiniteness to answer the pantings of the soul, and make a full reply to all its cravings. The satisfaction also consists in the certainty of the object of this knowledge, there being more sound and convincing reasons for the being of a God, his goodness, omnipresence, necessity of redemption, a future state of happiness and misery, than for any affairs of this world.

(4.) All are bound by the law of nature to know God. There is not an obligation by the law of nature to know Christ, unless it be as rational creatures are obliged to know and believe whatsoever God should reveal unto them; but there is a formal obligation upon man as a rational creature to know his Creator. For since all know that there is a God, by whose care and providence all in this world are ruled, they are obliged by the same law of nature to inquire after this God, and to endeavour to arrive to the knowledge of him.* What nation was there, though never so barbarous, that did not own even in their idolatry the worship of a God? For they naturally knowing that there was a God, did naturally know that that God was to be worshipped. Since, therefore, the law of nature obligeth us to inquire after God, he that neglects the knowledge of God sins against the law of nature. The wrath of God is threatened to be poured out upon them 'that know not God,' Ps. lxxix. 6; but the wrath of God is not manifested against any but those that are transgressors of the law.

(5.) This knowledge is only the perfection of the soul. The more excellent the object is, the more it doth perfect and strengthen, as well as gratify, the faculties of the soul: Prov. i. 9, it is 'an ornament of grace to the head;'

* Zanch. tom. ii. lib. iv. pp. 249, 250.

a greater ornament to the soul than a diadem can be to the head of a prince. The soul of man being enriched with two faculties whereby he is distinguished from all other creatures on earth, viz., understanding and will, his happiness must be placed in the exercise of those two about their proper object; the understanding, in knowing God as the object of happiness, and the will in willing to love him. Truth is the perfection of a rational understanding; the highest truth must then be the highest perfection of it. The mind of man was not created to determine itself in the contemplation of the lower things of this world. The sight of the beauty of God is the end of the soul, and what is the end of a thing is the perfection of it. The end of God in the creation was to communicate his goodness; the perfection of a soul, then, consists in the highest participation of that goodness according to its capacity. The image of God consists in this knowledge, Col. iii. 10. Every image is a participation of beams from the original. As darkness is the deformity of the world, and light the beauty of it, whereby the beauty of everything else is discovered, so knowledge is the beauty of the understanding, as ignorance is the deformity. If the knowledge of everything had been the perfection of man's soul, there would have been implanted notions of those things in the soul at her original, or they would have been the matter of divine revelation; but there is neither of those; there are not notions implanted; the soul could not then be so ignorant of the frame and motion of the body she dwells in. She knows not by natural, but acquired notions, the several rooms of the house wherein she resides. How many ages was man ignorant of the circulation of the blood, the distribution of the chyle through the *vena lactea*! Nor are those things the matter of divine revelation in the word. Christ discovered not a sublimity of natural knowledge, he spake not a syllable of those things, but of the discovery of his Father and himself. The Son of God had not employed himself in divine discoveries, had not the knowledge and embracing of him been the ornament and happiness of a reasonable creature. The most natural notions men bring with them into the world, and which are most obvious to their first notice, are that of a God, and desires for happiness; and the discovery of this, and directions in our aspiring to and preparations for another state of life after this, was the subject of the revelation made by Christ. Again, as it is the happiness of God to know and love himself, because he is the highest truth and goodness, so it is upon the same account the happiness of a creature to know and love God. If we could possibly suppose any goodness superior to God, it would be the felicity of God to know and love that goodness; he could not settle himself upon his own perfections, but run out in inquiries after, and affections to, that goodness superior to his. Certainly the mind of man, being nobler than the body, ought to be nourished with the choicest food; the perfection of it cannot be obtained but by that object which is most perfect in itself, and most capable to convey perfection to it. God only, as he is the rest of the will, so he is the only banquet of the mind. The soul being of a divine original, it being 'given by God,' Eccles. xii. 7, can only be nourished by divine dainties and converses, as the body doth attain its perfection by things of the same nature with its own composition. Let us, therefore, out of love to the perfection of our minds, pursue after this knowledge. The mind is an active thing; it will be busy about something or other; pitch it therefore upon the most excellent and most satisfying object; employ it not in the picking of straws, but gathering of pearls. When we employ it about things lower than God and Christ, without any regard to the adoration and admiration of them, we degrade our understanding, deprive it of its true end, and thrust it from that worthy employment allotted to it, which was to survey the works

of God, read his handwriting, and from thence arise to a further knowledge and admiration of our Creator himself.

(6.) This knowledge is highly delightful. All 'knowledge is pleasant to the soul,' *intellectio est quies intellectus*, Prov. ii. 10. The natural desires for knowledge are strongest, therefore when attained the delight is sweetest. The more reality any object hath, the more pleasure is in it; spiritual things are most real, and therefore the delightfulest. Natural knowledge is pleasant. What a sweetness is there in knowing the secrets of nature, and the phenomena in the world! The knowledge men have of them, though upon erroneous principles, is delightful; much more would it be so if the knowledge were exact and grounded upon certain principles of truth. The delights of learning surpass the delights of sense, and the pleasure of a scholar the pleasure of a swine. The heathen philosophers were so ravished with their chips of natural knowledge, that they sometimes neglected those things which were necessary for the sustaining their bodies. Now if the views of God in the dark disguise of his creatures cast the soul into pleasing raptures, the views of God in the clear glass of Christ must snatch the soul into the third heavens. The pleasure of carnal knowledge is to that of divine, as the delight of sucking the ivy bush is to that of drinking a sprightly wine. The pleasure is always answerable to the excellency of the object delighted in; if therefore a clear demonstration of nature resolves a man into a rapture, much more must a clear demonstration of God, because, as all righteousness is from God as the original, so all truth is by derivation from God. If therefore truth in the streams be a delightful prospect, the bubblings of truth in the fountain must much more put the soul into a spiritual ecstasy. As it is with a man born blind whose eyes were opened, how would he bless himself to see a burning lamp gilding the room where it is? But the sight of the moon walking in its brightness would enhance his joy, and the sight of the sun in his noonday glory, obscuring all the lesser lights, would much more pleasure and astonish him. All 'light is sweet,' but 'it is a pleasant thing to behold the sun,' Ecces. xi. 7. It is more pleasant to behold the sun, than all the diamonds in the world in conjunction; so the knowledge of God and Christ must be much more delicious than the knowledge of all creatures, by how much they are unconceivably more above them. If there be a gladness upon the sight of a beam emitted from the sun, what must there be in the views of the sun itself in its brightest beauty! Our very meditations of God are sweet, and resolve in a divine joy: Ps. civ. 34, 'My meditations of him shall be sweet, I will be glad in the Lord.' The greater degrees of knowledge will bestow a stronger influence of delight upon the soul. There is a rich perfume in the knowledge of Christ, a 'savour:' 2 Cor. ii. 14, 'The savour of his knowledge;' ver. 16, 'A savour of life to life,' vital to all the parts of the soul; and the more lively the knowledge, the more of pleasure. That which doth most increase strength, is most cordial to the vital parts of the body.

[1.] It is a pure delight. All other things have their spots, which allay the sweetness in the knowledge of them. God is purity without spot, light without darkness, all excellency to create delight, without any imperfection to raise disgust. As ignorance and forgetfulness of God will render men at last absolutely sad, without any mixture of joy, so the knowledge of him will render men, according to its degrees, as cheerful, as in the highest degree it will hereafter render them happy: it affords a pleasure without froth or scum.

[2.] It is a full pleasure. Others are but drops, this fills the soul to the brim, and leaves little or no room for any intruders. The angels, that have

the vision of God, hanker not after anything the world calls sweetness. The satisfaction of the mind is proportionable to the excellency of the object known. God being therefore the fullest object, affords the fullest joy.

[3.] It is a durable delight when all others will wither. Other knowledge is as a rainbow, pleasant to behold, but quickly vanishing, like the sound of music in the ear, which pleaseth and expires. The departure of an object strips the admirer of his real pleasure. Jonah's joy withered with the gourd wherein it was placed, but the knowledge of God and Christ is attended with a perpetual delight, since they are objects as durable as they are excellent; for where there is a saving knowledge, there is an eternal knot made between the understanding and the spiritual object, which cannot be dissolved.

[4.] It is a pleasure like to that which God has, which consists in reflections upon, and affections to his own nature. God cannot have an infinite satisfaction in anything besides himself, because nothing is infinite but himself. Upon this account let us pursue after this wisdom. The lowest degree is pleasant, joy is fulfilled in the soul upon the manifestations of God by Christ, John xvii. 13, which mounts to a greater height as we rise in higher degrees. Upon every fresh discovery, new joys disclose themselves. The search after God is a greater happiness than the fruition of anything in the world can be. But when the understanding, the highest faculty, and God, the chief truth and good, meet together, an unexpressible satisfaction must be the result of such a meeting. God being infinitely better than all creatures, the knowledge of him must be infinitely more delightful than the knowledge of all things besides. And though he cannot be perfectly known, yet this doth not blast the pleasure, as the heavens are too boundless for our eye, and the stars too numerous for our account, yet it is pleasant to behold the one and view the other.

(7.) If we do not labour to know God, we endeavour, as much as in us lies, to make God lose all the glory of his creation and revelation, because no creature under the heavens is a capable subject of this but man. All other creatures, that have sense without understanding, can only perceive those things which are objects of sense, as colours, odours, &c., but God being a Spirit, falls not within the limits of sense. Man only was made with an understanding to know the invisible God. The contempt of this knowledge, or the neglect of it, with a preferring the knowledge of everything else before him, is to deprive him of the glory of his work. All our natural gifts will not make us immediately serviceable to God, without a spiritual eye. This knowledge, though in one ignorant of the world, renders him more capable to pay immediately the glory due to God, than the greatest scholar with his philosophical wick of oil. A sunbeam reflected from the wall gives more heat and warmth than a thousand lamps. It makes God a loser in the glory of his gospel revelation. Knowledge is the basis of all our motions and affections to God which the gospel enjoins. The wheels were full of eyes, which some think* refers to the great measure of knowledge God would afford in the time of the gospel, Ezek. i. 18. When God should dwell in the world in glorious and majestic representations, the wheels, the people, should be full of eyes. If we neglect then the knowledge of God, we hinder him (as to us) both of the end of creation, wherein he hath made himself legible, and the end of his gospel dispensation, wherein he hath made himself evident in his Son.

(8.) It is easy to have a knowledge of God and Christ. What difficulty there is in it, lies not in God, or in the means of revelation, but in ourselves. As the law might be observed, but for the corruption of our flesh,—Rom.

* Lightfoot's Temple, chap. xxxviii. p. 253.

viii. 3, 'The law was weak through the flesh,'—so God might be spiritually seen, but for the soreness of our eyes. It lies not in the object, but in our indisposition, in regard of the enmity of our nature, and the unworthy notions we have naturally of God. No wisdom is less admired and less affected, men hate wisdom and thereby love death, Prov. viii. 36, there being a dissimilitude between the nature of God and the corrupt nature of man. Nothing so easy to be known as God, though nothing so hard to be searched out unto perfection. The sun doth visibly offer its beams to every eye that will open itself, and let him shine upon it. Nothing more easy to be seen than the sun, yet nothing more hard to be pierced into and fully understood. If we do not know God, it is not for want of light in him, but for want of will in us. He hath not so clouded himself in thick darkness, that it is impossible to have some prospect of him. He hath set his footsteps in the creatures, and unveiled his face in the Scriptures; he hath made himself intelligible in his works and in his word, and breaks out upon our understandings in both. What is knowable of God in order to practice is not closed up from our sight, we have rich discoveries of his holiness and excellency in his word, which informs us what our behaviour should be towards him. We must not apprehend God to be so mean a being as that we can easily satisfy all our curiosities about him. Know him perfectly we cannot, unless we had an understanding as infinite as his own; and indeed we might well be ashamed of that God, that were so little as to be measured by our finite capacities. Yet so far as doth conduce to our practice and comfort, God is as intelligible as anything in this world, and more; we may know more of his original goodness than of the derivative goodness of any creature. His attributes are as evident to us as the quality of anything we see; we may as soon know that God is good, and excellent, and holy, as we may know that the wall is white or no. We have higher principles of the knowledge of him. We have sense to view the effects of his goodness, we have reason to draw conclusions from the excellency of creatures, to inform us of the transcendent excellency of God; and we have revelation, which surmounts the other two principles of sense and reason. What though we cannot know his essence? Do we know the essence of any one thing in the world, or can we satisfy ourselves in all our inquiries about it? His perfections are unfathomable by us, yet he is obvious to our minds if we will not close our eyes. We can as easily see the sea when we stand upon the shore, as it is impossible for us to reach with our eyes the bounds of it. But suppose the knowledge of God we speak of were very hard, shall the difficulty which whets us in other things take off our edge in this? Who can boast of the knowledge of any one creature? Yet since the world began men have been peering into the secrets of them. Multitudes have been busy in the search of natural things, and the difficulty is less affrighting now than it was before; shall then the seeming difficulty of the most satisfying objects close up our desires and endeavours in the search of them? It should rather add spurs to our diligence. Paul's foresight of what was out of his reach slackened not his desires and endeavours of attaining, Philip. iii. 12, 13. The knowledge of Christ is easy; had it not been so, he would not have so sharply rebuked his disciples for their ignorance: Mat. xv. 16, 'Are ye yet without understanding?' Is he not the subject of the whole Scripture, and, like a golden ore, runs through every vein in the mine? He is the centre wherein all the lines of the Scripture meet; we can open no part of it but something of Christ strikes upon our minds, as light in the day upon the opening of our eyes. 'In the volume of the book it is written of him,' in the first promise, and in the last line of

the Scripture. He is the *Alpha* and *Omega* of all revelations and discoveries ; it is therefore our own fault if we will be in darkness under a noonday sun. God desires we should know him ; why doth he else compare himself to so many objects in the visible world, but that we may have frequent remembrances of his excellency ; and ascribe to his incorporeal nature the members of a man, as arms, ears, &c., which are incompatible with a spiritual being, but that, knowing ourselves and our own frame, we may rise up to a knowledge of him?

(9.) Consider, is not our time spent unprofitably in everything else when we neglect this ? All other wisdom is perishing, this heavenly wisdom only endures for ever. Will the skill in trades remain with any man, and be an advantage to him in another world ? Not but that there must be time spent in learning and improving your callings for the good of yourselves, families, and the community ; but not so much as to swallow up the time due to the other. There is a satisfaction in natural learning ; but what advantage is that in another world, where worldly wisdom and learned subtleties shall take no place ? There will be no use of them in eternity, whither we are travelling. It is the knowledge of God and Christ we shall there be examined about ; we may have the greatest wisdom of the world, and be without this saving knowledge at the last day, and receive the punishment of devils, instead of the happiness of Christians. Christ never put up a thanksgiving to his Father for the learning of the pharisee, or the wisdom of statesmen, but for the revelation of himself to the babes of the world, Mat. xi. 25. The knowledge of a good man only is understanding, Prov. ix. 10. It is a dreadful place against the wise as well as the mighty men of the earth : 1 Cor. i. 26, 'Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty.' Prudence and power, abstracted from divine knowledge, are contemptible in the eyes of God. Here and there one wise and mighty man marked out for an happy eternity, but not many. All knowledge below this is but the knowledge of trifles. In other things, we lose our time for the most part ; by this, we gain an happy eternity. Other knowledge will not prevent the loss of ourselves ; in this, we find God and ourselves too. Let us not therefore sell our understandings for nought, as God complains they did his people, Isa. lii. 3. Other gettings are inconsiderable to the gain of understanding, Prov. iv. 7. Oh that we could take as much pains to get this, which is eternal life, as the heathens have taken for human sciences, which could not secure them from eternal death, and seek for it with as much industry and as high a value of it as we would for silver and hidden treasures ! Prov. ii. 4, 5.

There are hindrances of this knowledge, and helps to it.

Hindrances. (1.) Corrupt affections. When the apostle had exhorted the Ephesians to be 'renewed in the spirit of their minds,' Eph. iv. 23, he seems to add directions to his exhortation ; and one is, verse 26, to be watchful over their passions, 'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.' Else they would give place to the devil, who is the great enemy of divine light, and the 'ruler of the darkness of this world.' Passions are the fumes of hell, to cloud and obstruct the beams of Christ from shining upon the mind ; these distract the native force of the soul, and choke all beginnings of divine meditation. Who can learn anything in the midst of a storm ? A serenity of mind is a way to know God : Ps. xlv. 10, 'Be still, and know that I am God.' A turbulent spirit is a bar to it. The soul overcast with unworthy passions is no more fit for this light, than the sky thronged with clouds is for the light of the sun, or a foul glass to reflect an image. Light and inconstant spirits have not the knowledge of God, any more than running water can receive the force of a sunbeam, which glides away from one after an-

other, and remains under the power and force of none. You can never set a stamp upon a floating cork till you take it out of the water. Corrupt affections warp the understanding to irregular operations.

(2.) Sensuality. Sensuality, and a want of the Spirit, the great enlightener, are inseparable companions: Jude 19, 'Sensual, having not the Spirit.' A generous knowledge can never grow up in a sensual spirit, any more than a generous plant can in a marsh always covered with salt water. An atheist may be said to know God as well as one steeped in sensuality, which is practical atheism. Those that deny God in their works never understood him in their mind: 1 Sam. ii. 12, 'The sons of Eli were sons of Belial,' and therefore 'knew not the Lord.' This being a familiarity with hell, can never be a means of acquaintance with God. The way to be heavenly wise is not to be brutish. Laughter is mad, and sensualists mad men, who can as well understand God as bedlams can understand sobriety. The more the soul is sunk in bodily pleasures, the more feeble and unactive it is, the more languishing and sickly; the more it soars above them, the more lively and fresh it appears. The heathen philosophers could therefore prescribe the soul's abstraction from the body to be necessary to divine knowledge and meditation. So great a privilege as this is not becoming one that is in a professed slavery to the flesh. The Jews say that the sensuality of the seventy that were with Moses, when they saw the vision of God, was the cause they had not a more perfect sight; from Exod. xxiv. 11, 'They saw God, and did eat and drink;' understanding it not of the actions afterwards, but of the reason why God gave them not such a measure of the Spirit as Moses (which is signified by laying on his hand), because they were soaked much in sensual delights. Who can see the glory of the sun where all the windows and gaps, through which the light should peep, are daubed and stopped with a thick clay? While we are clogged with the thick and filthy mire of base lusts, we cannot behold the glory of God and Christ.

(3.) Carnal conceptions of God. We are naturally apt to frame a notion of God, according to the complexion of worldly things, or our own passions; to think God 'such an one as ourselves,' Ps. l. 21, hereby erecting an earthly and vicious deity. The heathen had at first the knowledge of God: Rom. i. 19, 'God hath shewed it to them;' and they are said to 'know God.' The true God discovered himself; God would not have discovered a false god to them. But they not only neglected the improvement of this knowledge, but mixed the carnal brood of their own opinions and resemblances with it. And by this mixture of the natural knowledge they had of God, and the corrupt notions they entertained of what this God was; by this unnatural mixture, I say, was produced a monstrous and misshapen image of God in their minds, and in the world, unworthy of God, and unworthy of a rational soul; as when some genuine and true principle mixeth with some foul and carnal conception, the issue is monstrous. Men study to frame such notions of God as may maintain their pride and wantonness, and feed their lusts, not satisfy their understandings. Such errors in the head hinder us from a spiritual sight of God, as a mass of congealed vapours in the head darkens or tinctures the eye that it cannot rightly discern objects before it. The head must be purged of that flux of humours which discharge themselves to that organ, before the blemish it hath occasioned be cured. Erroneous prepossessions must be displaced before good principles can take root in the understanding; the mind must be unclouded of those mists before it can discern the most excellent objects.

(4.) Earthliness. A soul steeped in earth cannot attain divine things. Clogged wings cannot mount into the air. The mud of the earth is a screen

between the beams of God and eye of the soul. When the mind is covered with thick clay, it cannot behold the admirable things of the gospel, or receive any impressions of the Spirit on it, any more than those that work all the day in deep mines, under ground; can behold the sun. A little of the world delighted in, will hinder the sight of God. Though the sun be vast, the heavens large, and the sun dart his beams round about the world, yet if a small brass farthing be laid upon the eye it cannot see the sun, or the beams of it which shine round about it. John v. 44, 'How can you believe, that receive honour one of another?' Ambitious and covetous men are so possessed with their immoderate desires after honours and riches, that they cannot much mind natural knowledge, more proportioned to the genius and gust of their souls, and much less divine. The mind of man cannot at one and the same time attend several charges; when the strength is spent one way, it is languishing another. Earthliness hinders the knowledge of Christ, and bars out a right estimation of the things of heaven. A man brought up in a dungeon cannot know the excellency of superior bodies. A worm that dwells always under the earth may as well see the sun, as a man whose eyes and mind are in the centre of the earth understand and see God. Worldly spirits have more of the earth-worm than the man. We must therefore do as Christ bids the blind man, wash the clay off our eyes in the pool of Siloam. The more of earth we have, the less capable we are of the illuminations of heaven; the centre of the earth is dark and obscure, and is not penetrated by the light of the sun.

(5.) Pride of reason. When we 'lean to our own understanding,' we 'acknowledge not God,' Prov. iii. 5, 6. The pharisees were the proudest of all the people (John vii. 49, 'Have any of the pharisees believed on him?'), and they were the most ignorant of gospel truths; they would have their own opinions a rule to all the people. Pride being the devil's sin, cannot be pleasing to God. He that looks upon himself too much, is like to look up to heaven too little; we cannot behold ourselves and heaven together at the same instant. If God hide spiritual revelations from any, it is from 'the wise and prudent,' Mat. xi. 25, 30, *i. e.* from those that think themselves wise enough; and it is dreadful to consider, that it is God's pleasure, and he hath Christ's thanks for it. They both concur against pride: God will not open the veil to such, and Christ applauds his Father's proceedings. The first lesson Christ teacheth in his school, being the doctrine of self-denial, as a foundation of all other learning, is point blank against this. We enjoy most of Christ when we feel ourselves empty, and we are like to know most of Christ when we acknowledge ourselves ignorant. The Laodicean church conceited she had clear eyes, and therefore knew not her blindness, and desired no eye-salve, Rev. iii. 17, 18; such will be contrary to the apostle's rule, James i. 19, &c. Quick to speak, and slow to hear, and God never sets such a divine plant as this in such rocky ground; they are heights and fortifications which hinder us from the knowledge of Christ, *ὑψώματα καὶ ὀχυρώματα*, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

(6.) Curiosity. Either desiring to know, only that we may know, not that we may obey, or prying into things too high. Curious inquiries about things which are not revealed, hinder that knowledge which is saving from making any great impression. When God discovered his glory to the Israelites, in giving the law, he 'set bounds to the people,' Exod. xix. 12, 21, that they might not be too busily inquisitive. The gospel, though more open and large, hath still its limits: 'It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power,' Acts i. 7. To desire to know more than God would have us know, is to come short of

that which otherwise we might be capable of knowing. When Adam would aspire to a greater measure of knowledge than God would allow him, he fell thereby into a brutish state. God is to be judge of what is fit to be revealed, and if we would go further, we entrench upon his wisdom and sovereignty. There is a wisdom to sobriety, Rom. xii. 3. Curious disputes are the same in spirituals, with the extravagancies of bedlams; while men think to strengthen, they crack their brains, as the foolish fly approaching too near the candle, loseth both its eyes and wings. God makes foolish the wisdom of this world, turns such aspiring wisdom back into folly. The wise man compares knowledge to honey, Prov. xxv. 16, which if eaten in too great a quantity, provokes vomiting; instead of pleasing, it weakens and hurts the stomach. Superfluous inquiries after God are the disease of the soul,* and are so far from drawing the veil, or making it thinner and more penetrable, that it thickens it and makes it more obscure.

(7.) Inquiring no further than what hath been imprinted on us by education; or to take truth upon trust from man, to 'have the faith of Christ in respect of persons,' James ii. 1. Though we may know a spiritual truth, yet it is not in a spiritual manner; the object of knowledge is good, but the manner of knowledge lame, and wants its due rectitude. When we receive any truth from a human authority, or in respect to a person, we receive it upon no better an account than we should a fable delivered by the same hand.† Custom, tradition, and the examples of others, are the rise of the knowledge many men have of God and Christ. It is true, indeed, we come to know a star by another's pointing us to it, but afterwards we come to know it by its own light.

Directions, both for the attainment and improvement of divine knowledge.

1. Prayer. This is a general means for everything we want, but ought to be more pressed than any, both because of its universal influence, and the common deplorable neglect or slight performance of it. The knowledge of God springs not from a natural but a divine light; it is not an extract of nature, a branch growing up from the root of our own abilities, but of a divine original wrought by the 'Spirit of wisdom and revelation,' Eph. i. 17; it is not the prize of a quick imagination, but a bended knee; the apostle else had not been so earnest a supplicant in this behalf for the Ephesians. It is not the proper act of our own understanding, but a reception of illapses and dartings from God.‡ An hour therefore of sincere prayer may do more in this case, than the prayerless inquiries of a life longer extended than Methuselah's. If, therefore, we are to implore the assistance of God in the works of our daily callings, much more ought we to seek to him for this treasure, the keys whereof he keeps in his own hands. Now there is a double act of God in this, which makes prayer more necessary than in any other case that is not of the like concern. There is to be the unveiling his face, and the unsealing our eyes; the removing the clouds from his majesty, and the darkness from our minds; a clearing the object, and discharging the faculty of its blindness. The heathens considered this, when they apprehended God to be the *intellectus agens*, purifying the *phantasmata* for our understanding. A human understanding, without outward revelation and inward eye-salve, is and will be a miserable blind creature.

(1.) God only can open the mind. A lost eye can never be restored by a created power, nor the blind understanding opened but by Christ's touch, Luke iv. 18. The first Adam's sin put out the candle, the second Adam's grace relights it. There is a faculty, a 'spirit in man,' in miserable fallen

* τῆς ψυχῆς νόσημα ἴσται τὸ κακῶς καὶ περιέργως ζῆταῖν περὶ Θεοῦ.—Basil.

† Reynolds.

‡ Fucin. in Dionys. de divin. nomin. cap. xx.

man, but 'the inspiration of the Almighty gives understanding,' Job xxxii. 8. Since our understanding is corrupted by sin, and filled with error, it is not sufficient to understand the things of God without an internal illumination, as well as an external revelation. All our sufficiency for intellection, as well as action, is of God. We are 'not sufficient of ourselves to think a good thought,' 2 Cor. iii. 5. Can we then have quickening apprehensions and lively thoughts of God without God? We can no more understand the gospel without grace, than we can understand God without the gospel; for those things in the gospel which may conduct us to him, are foolishness in the judgment of the most elevated corrupt nature, 1 Cor. ii. 14. Why were the Israelites, that had seen more miraculous providences of God, ignorant of him, but because 'God gave them not an heart to perceive'? Deut. xxix. 4. We may indeed by study find a proposition so clear as to engage our assent, but not without supernatural influence have such a knowledge of God as to change our souls. We cannot ascend to that which is infinite, without the power of that infinite; nor make ourselves like to an infinite being, without the communication of that infinite strength. If Christ as God had not opened the disciples' understanding, his teaching them as man would have been labour in vain, and made as little entrance into their hearts as into those of the obstinate pharisees, Luke xxiv. 45. He discoursed to them the true sense of Scripture as man, but imprinted the power of it upon their hearts as God. There must be an inward light in the eye, the instrument of sight, as well as in the air, the medium of vision; and inward air in the ear, to hear the sound, as well as outward air to produce and convey the sound. God is not known by us without an operation of God in us. David evinceth this, who though he had an enlightened mind, pretends not a power of further enlarging it, but calls upon God for a supernatural virtue: 'Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things.'

(2.) God only can reveal the object. God only can make himself known. We see not the sun but by the sun; we see other things by the sun, but we see not the sun by any other light than its own. True notions of God spring from grace upon the soul, as light from the sun upon the eyes. And as the sun, so God and Christ appear most ravishing in their own light. As none can know God perfectly but himself, so none can make him known to us but himself. The discovery of himself is his own free act and motion. What creature is able to force the veil from before his face against his mind? The first spark and the succeeding additions are from him. Moses had the first revelation of God from God, and when his heart breathed after more, he hath recourse to God for satisfaction: Exod. xxxiii. 18, 'I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.' Christ appropriates this to the Father: Mat. xi. 25, 'Father, thou hast revealed them.' The title of *Father of lights* belongs only to him. What the sun is in regard of natural, that is God in regard of spiritual light. The disciples own Christ the author of his own manifestation, in that question wherein they admire the riches of his grace: John xiv 22, 'How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not to the world?' Light cannot break out without his pleasure, and none can stop it when he is pleased to dart it. Indeed, all knowledge, under what title soever, is from God, as well as our being, and the beings of all creatures. As our faculties are the products of his power, so every endowment of them is the fruit of his bounty. Other knowledge is from him as an indulgent Creator, this from him as a merciful Redeemer; that, by the Spirit brooding over the world by a common work of inspiration (as he brought the creatures at the first creation into form and beauty), this by a more particular energy, as a special gift upon the Mediator's account, teaching all

things necessary to be known of God, and breathing immediately upon the spirit of man.

If it be, then, God's gift upon both accounts, it must be sought at his hands. Holy men have always done so. David got most of his divine learning upon his knees. How often do you find him with his bended knee, elevated eyes, and strong cries: Ps. cxix., 'Teach me thy statutes,' 'open mine eyes,' 'give me understanding,' 'teach me thy judgments and knowledge,' 'make thy face to shine upon thy servant,' &c. Wisdom is attained by asking, James i. 5. This course will not want success. God is near to all that call upon him,' Ps. cxlv. 18, near them in his favour, clearing up their apprehensions of him, new stamping their minds and hearts. They see most of a thing who are nearest to it; prayer brings us before God upon his throne of grace in his majesty and mercy. It is a leaning upon Christ's bosom; and the disciple who enjoyed that familiarity with our Saviour on earth, knew most of his mind. Prayer will as it were bring down God to be our instructor, and one hour of God's teaching will be more fruitful than thousands of years of our own study. One appearance of the sun is better than a world full of torches. How soon can he flash a strong light upon our minds, command the scales from our eyes, as soon as he did darkness from the chaos; and as easily by a word create a new eye, as well as a mighty sun? He is a non-such for instruction: Job xxxvi. 22, 'Who teacheth like him?' *docet et imperat*.* None so clearly, none so pleasantly, none so speedily. But we must earnestly beg it, there must be a cry, a lifting up the voice, Prov. ii. 3, 5, 6, then shall we 'find the knowledge of God,' for 'out of his mouth comes understanding.' Our earnestness in desiring it cannot come near the pleasure of God in bestowing it, when he finds it longed for. And why should not the natural desire for knowledge, when terminated upon a right object, break forth into as strong prayer, as our natural desire for happiness; both appetites seeming to be with an equal force implanted in man; desire of felicity as the end, and desire of knowledge as the means to it? As our happiness, which is naturally desired, cannot be attained but from God, so the knowledge, which is the way to it, cannot come from any spring but the grace of God, who ought upon this account to be solicited by us. And truly, I think, the great reason why men come so short in this knowledge, is because they are negligent in this means, and depend upon their own inquiries and search more than upon God's inspirations.

2. Study the Scripture much. He that would gain knowledge, would pick out the choicest authors, and turn over the best books. The subject of the gospel is God, and God manifested in the flesh. The Scriptures 'testify of Christ,' John v. 39; they are the swaddling-bands wherein he hath been wrapped up since his first incarnation, as the seed of the woman in the promise. Other books may dart some light of human knowledge, but this is a beam of divine. It acquaints us with the most excellent truth, which makes us both wise and happy. It is the record of our Saviour's declarations of the name of God, which was a principal intent of his coming. Therein are discovered the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and a wisdom which none of the princes of this world knew, none of the great conquerors or learned philosophers. All spiritual discoveries drawn from thence have the seal and stamp of God upon them, and none else. God hath, as it were, shut up his Spirit in the gospel. It is 'the ministration of the Spirit,' 2 Cor. iii. 8, *i. e.* whereby the Spirit, who is to teach us all things, is conveyed to the soul. Knowledge built upon any other principle is nothing but a

* Castalio.

frame of delusions. It is a dangerous thing to think those things of God which are true, unless we are certain of the truth of them; and where can we have a convincing evidence, but from his own revelation? The gospel is called the face of Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 6, 'To give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,' *i. e.* as some interpret it, in the gospel. Indeed, he hath imprinted his own features, and the representations of God, in the gospel, that as in the Old Testament we may behold his glorious outgoings in creation and providence, the deliverances of his people, and punishing his enemies, so in the New we may view his glorious counsels of redeeming goodness; as the looking upon the picture of a friend preserves the memory of his features, and recalls to mind the memorable actions done by him, and preserves, if not increaseth, the knowledge of him. The word is a glass wherein we behold the reflections of God, James i. 23, and it is perfect, Ps. xix. 7. It discovers as much of the nature and amiableness of God as can be drawn in lines and letters, and presents the soul with such attractives in him as turns it fully to him; as it follows, 'converting the simple.' If the beauty of the Lord was seen in the legal sanctuary, Ps. xxvii. 4, much more in the evangelical transcript, so plain that he that is a student in it, when translated to heaven, may know God and Christ by what knowledge he had of their lineaments in the word, as the remembrance of the features in a picture will direct us to know the person when we meet him. The angels themselves seem to be put off to gather their knowledge of Christ from the flowers of the word as delivered to the church, and in the church: Eph. iii. 10, 'The wisdom of God is made known by the church to the principalities in heavenly places.' It is made known to the church by the word, to angels by the church, so that the knowledge of the angels is ultimately resolved into the word as the *medium* of it. As it is a means to gain it, so it is a means to increase it; there are new amazing wonders to be seen in it. Though many diamonds have been cut out of a rock, yet there are more still for the workman's skill and industry. While the powers in heaven are instructed by it, the most elevated understanding on earth cannot be above it. He that looks often into it will view more by an eye of faith than all the world can by their eyes of reason in conjunction. By this instrument, we shall behold the greatness, majesty, loveliness, and love of God, more than any rational discoveries can present to us; as a man by an instrument sees the magnitude and glory of the stars, which an ignorant man thinks to be little sparks of light, like those in his chimney. The ignorance among us may be charged upon the neglect of studying this, or the slight reading of it. Some will plead the intricacy of it for their neglect. Not to say that, as to the main design of it, it is plain in itself; let such that excuse themselves upon this account consider whether they are not conscious to themselves that they never spent the tenth part, nay, perhaps not a dram, of that industry, zeal, and desire in the searching that hidden mine of spiritual treasures, as they have spent in heaping up the perishing trifles of this world. I will appeal to those that do make it their business to inquire into the word, whether they find not themselves to have more lively apprehensions of God, and feel, and taste divine truths in another kind of manner, than they experiment in other books. Let the experiences of others move those that neglect it. Manna dropped from heaven was more relishing in itself than all the meat of the Israelites' cooking; it was angels' food. And for the manner of conversing with it, the laying down rules would be too copious. Consider well what you read; stay upon the descriptions you find of God and Christ, dig into them as into a mine; rest not till you find the satisfying importance of them, till you feel your hearts

stir, and rise up in an adoration of him. 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him,' Ps. xxv. 14, 'and he will shew them his covenant.' Consider the inward virtue and efficacy of it, as a wise man will the virtue of the flowers and plants, as well as their beauty and gay clothing. And while you study the history of the gospel, pray for the revelation of the Father. Flesh and blood may read it, but the Father only reveals it savingly. The eye may see the letters, the head may understand the sense, when the Spirit opens not the heart to feel the warmth.

3. Entertain with affection every spiritual motion. We can no more profit in divine knowledge without the breathing of the Spirit, and the dews of his grace, than the labour of an husbandman can come to any maturity without the warm irradiations of the sun, and the showers of rain. The more solemn discoveries of God and Christ to the heart were reserved for the appearance of the Spirit, upon which account Christ, while in the flesh, is said but to 'begin to teach,' Acts i. 1. The foundation was laid by Christ, but the consummation of this discovery, and the last line, was reserved for the Spirit. Christ declared the name of God, and his own commission, but the Spirit afterwards was to verify and confirm this commission as authentic in the minds of men. He is therefore called 'the Spirit of truth,' as testifying the authority of Christ: John xv. 26, 'The Spirit of truth shall testify of me;' and also, in regard of his conduct of men into truth: John xvi. 13, 'The Spirit of truth will guide you into all truth.' He was first to demonstrate to their minds that Christ was authorised by God, and that his declarations of God were firm, true, and ratified in heaven, and then to guide them into those truths which were necessary for their comfort and practice; to open the secret resolves of eternity concerning the work of redemption, and draw the curtain from before those mysteries which the eye of nature was not able to reach. The first work of the Spirit is that of knowledge. He communicates himself to our understandings, before he makes impressions upon our wills, as the sun first enlightens the air before he warms it (knowledge is that in the mind, which light is in the air). For, as the Spirit dealt with Christ, so he deals with his members; he first rests upon them as a Spirit of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, Isa. xi. 2, 3, and acts in that order wherein Christ is presented to us by God, first wisdom, then righteousness and sanctification, 1 Cor. i. 30. Whatsoever, therefore, the Spirit doth by virtue of his office, must be listened to; and every offer, every motion, he makes for our instruction, must be entertained; for though God hath appointed many outward instructors, yet there is but one internal teacher, viz. the Holy Ghost. And there is a resistance of the Spirit in this work of knowledge, as well as in the work of grace; and the resistance lies chiefly here, because the Spirit's first work is to rectify the judgment in the nature of God, and things belonging to God, and present the excellency of the knowledge of Christ; and when this is entertained, he reflects it upon the will and affections, that the faculties may regularly follow one another in the order of working, and the soul, in turning to God, may act, and be acted, as a rational creature; for while he is busy in reducing the soul to its original constitution and true nature, he would not move the soul against the primitive order of nature, but in such a manner as its return and obedience may be regular and becoming a rational creature. When, therefore, a man refuseth the motions of the Spirit, whereby his mind may be informed, the Spirit is resisted by him. Every motion is a beam from heaven: let us take heed of shutting our eyes against it, lest it be snatched away by the interposition of some dark cloud, and we never enjoy the like again, but lose the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, and thereby the

most excellent wisdom in earth or heaven. If we neglect his motions, we put a slight upon that person, whereby only God reveals divine things to us: 1 Cor. ii. 10, 'God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit.' We contemn the only instructor that can acquaint us with God; 'the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God,' ver. 11, *i. e.* no man knows them but by the Spirit. It is exclusive of all men, though the strongest rationalists. If we listen not, then, to this Spirit, we shall receive a stronger ignorance as a reward of our frowardness. Would any man stop his ears, or shut his doors against an angel sent by God from heaven upon a happy errand? Behold in every divine motion a greater than an angel, yea, than all the illuminated blessed angels in heaven. Since it is, therefore, a beam from heaven shooting in upon the mind, follow it, and it will direct to a fuller prospect of light, as when a ray of the sun strikes through a cranny of a wall, the laying the eye close to the hole will help us to see more, and perhaps the body of the sun from whence it streamed. If we, therefore, give way to the motions of the Spirit, it may be with us as with the apostles, who were dull and ignorant in the time of their master, and, just before the ascension of Christ, betrayed their ignorance of his design in coming, in proposing to him the settling of an earthly kingdom, Acts i. 6. But when the Spirit came upon them, how did he refine their minds, burn up the chaff of their grosser conceits! How noble were their apprehensions of the spirituality of Christ's kingdom, and their souls filled with divine light! So may we, in our measures, if we wait for the Spirit, and observe his movings upon us. Let us, therefore, hereby give encouragement to the Spirit to inform us with delight, who is no less pleased than our Saviour was, when any received his instructions, and stretched out their souls to catch his gales. More is learned from such a teacher than from a multitude of ignorant men, if we were to live for ever with them. The neglect of those motions is the worm at the root of all our perfections, and continues the blindness of our minds, and the perversity of our hearts. It concerns us, therefore, to look to this.

4. Labour and long for new hearts. As there is an enmity to God in lapsed nature, so there is a disrelish of God in the knowledge of him, till the vitiated palate be cured by the removal of the infectious humour. The disease of the eye must be removed before we can discern things plainly and delightfully. Our natural eye while distempered is made worse by looking long or often upon an object, and can take no pleasure in the view of anything. That eye that would gaze upon the sun must be sun-like, of the nature of the sun: the soul must become divine before it can know the divinity. As no man can act, so no man can understand well divine things unless he be in a divine state; and therefore no unconverted person can in that state have this knowledge. Who can behold that which he turns his back upon? He that turns his back upon the sun may see the earth, but not the sun, in that posture. The knowledge of God, a relation to him as his people, and a covenant interest in him as their God, were all founded upon a turning to him with the whole heart: Jer. xxiv. 7, 'For they shall return unto me with their whole heart;' so Hosea vi. 1, 3. First let us return to the Lord, then shall we know. It is then that God pours out the Spirit as a living spring, and gives him to be our tutor and instructor in divine learning, to 'make known his words' to us when we 'turn at his reproof,' Prov. i. 23. Then shall we view everything with a new light, and see something more in God, his word and ways, than we did before; as men, when they begin to study some art, look upon all things in a new manner and form, according to the rules of that art they are engaged in. An unregenerate man cannot have lively and quick apprehensions of God, no more

than a blind man can frame a true and distinct conception of colours and light, notwithstanding his hearing several discourses about the essential properties of them. As sense only can perceive visible objects, and reason rational, so spiritual sense only can perceive spiritual objects. A natural man can no more judge of spiritual things as spiritual than a beast can judge of the excellency of moral virtue. Saving knowledge of God, in order of nature, follows regeneration, though the historical knowledge of God, the object, precedes it; for God being the object of religion and conversion must be known before any act can be exercised about them.

5. Obedience and purity of heart is the way to increase this knowledge. The freer the eye is from bad humours, the more able it is delightfully to behold the sun. In a full righteousness God's face is beheld hereafter: Ps. xvii. 17, 'As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness,' and according to imperfect measures of righteousness we behold his face here. Our Saviour makes purity to precede, and the sight of God to follow: Mat. v. 8, 'The pure in heart shall see God.' The more the heart is purified, the more the mind is cleared to have an insight into the things of God; whereas a defiled heart sends out streams to mud the understanding, as a foul stomach raiseth vapours to disturb the head. Purity prepares the soul for a more free and constant residence of the Spirit, the great instructor. He is a dove, and doves care not for foul and polluted places. As the foul spirit loves a polluted lodging, so doth the Holy Spirit a pure soul. He that fears God is the subject of God's teaching, Ps. xxv. 12, but to leave off to do good is to leave off to be wise, Ps. xxxvi. 3. 'Moses hid his face, and was afraid to look upon God,' Exod. iii. 6, which the Jews understand of a fear of reverence, and for that cause (they say) he was rewarded with a sight of the similitude of God, Num. xii. 8, 9; and indeed 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,' *i. e.* the first foundation divine wisdom lays in building her house in any soul. God required a three days' purification of the Israelites before he would dispense the law and admit them to a knowledge of his will, and is not a purity requisite to a knowledge of his nature? To think to see God, without purity in the soul, is as if we should imagine we could behold visible objects without a crystalline humour in the ball of the eye. 'He that doth God's will shall know the doctrine of Christ,' John vii. 17. As in practical arts the skill is increased more by working than studying, so is the knowledge of God increased by the practice of what we know.* God delights to be obeyed; and where he is obeyed, he delights to give greater discoveries of himself, both to encourage and direct to a further obedience. As Christ by his obedience had the communications of God to him, so shall we by our obedience have the communications of Christ to us, which he calls an 'abiding in his love,' John xv. 10. A purified soul is more capable of divine beams than a sharp wit. Plato could say that, after a walking with God, or a *τὸ συζεῆν*, a living with him, a certain light breaks out upon us as from fire, and falls upon our souls.

6. Humility. If grace be given to the humble, the grace of the best knowledge is not excluded from God's liberality; we gain it sooner by an humble contemplation than proud wranglings. As to obey God we must deny our wills, so to know him we must deny our reasons; will must submit to precept, and reason to revelation. Agur acknowledged himself brutish, who came behind none of his age, unless Solomon, in understanding, Prov. xxx. 2. The humble person will quickly be a scholar in this learning, when a pharisee shall remain as ignorant as he is proud. God reveals himself to babes, Mat. xi. 24, not to those that conceit themselves giants. Those that

* *Τήρησις τῶν ἐπιστολῶν γινώσις τοῦ Θεοῦ.*—Basil.

hear Christ's voice must have the quality of sheep, John x. 4. The meek God acquaints with his choicest truths: Ps. xxv. 9, 'The meek will he teach his way.' As God 'knows the proud afar off,' Ps. cxxxviii. 6, so doth the proud man know God afar off. It is not possible, when God beholds him at a great distance, that he can behold God. A proud scholar and a dove-like teacher can never accord. God 'humbles himself,' Ps. cxiii. 6; we must be like him if we would understand him. Christ was meek and lowly; he is never like to be a learner who imitates not his master's pattern. Especially when in this humiliation of Christ the attributes of God shone out brighter than in creation or general providence. What God required in his son as a medium for the discovery of himself, he will require in us to make us capable of a communication of that knowledge. We are never fit to hear God till we hear with submission. Humility brings us into such a posture, it takes away the blocks which lie in the way of saving truth; it drives away inconsideration, silenceth contradictions against the truth, and stifles curiosity. If we will not, therefore, slight God's direction, we must 'be fools that we may be wise,' 1 Cor. iii. 18. Our dulness doth grieve Christ, but not so much as our conceitedness. Christ spake in parables to the arrogant pharisees, but he repeated his instructions to his humble disciples, though he reprov'd them for their dulness. The pride and curiosity of this age sets men back in the knowledge of God, but it is likely a sharp lance is not far off to cut the swelling.

7. Heavenly meditation. An heavenly mind hath brighter and more delightful apprehensions of God than all the carnal world. The purer the air we live in, the more active and strong is the body; the air of heaven quickens the understanding and clears the sight. By meditation we enter within the veil and behold his glory. He meets those that humbly aspire to him; frequent ascents of the mind to God is the way to attain the manifestations of him, Exod. xix. 3. When Moses went up to God (which the Jews* understand of an intellectual ascent, an ascent of meditation), the Lord called to him out of the mount; that they understand of his corporeal ascent. Abstraction is necessary to this best of sciences. If we are thus out of the body, we may with Paul hear and know things which are unutterable. The senses of the soul, which are as real and have as real operations about their proper objects, as the external senses of sight and taste have about sensible objects, are thus to be exercised; and when they are so, it makes us capable of stronger meat and more spiritual knowledge, Heb. v. 14. Without this we cannot come to a knowledge of God. Who can know the sun if he shuts his eyes, or understand music if he stop his ears? and know God if he never stirs up his understanding about him? We use the faculties and senses which are proper for the objects propos'd.† If music be presented, we employ our ears; if the sun shine, we use our eyes, not our ears; if we would know God, we must employ our minds, they can only be conversant about him. By this ascent of meditation we may see more of God in a moment than otherwise we can do in an age, as a man may see more of London upon the top of the Exchange in half a quarter of an hour than he can by going about in many days, or standing in one street many years. But let our affections keep an equal pace with our meditations, that the heart may be inflamed with a divine love. Endeavour to have a savour of Christ's ointments. Cant. i. 3; we shall then profit more in the knowledge of God in a week, than, without blowing up our affections, we shall do in many years; for then God will communicate himself to us with a more cordial affection than we can embrace him.

* Maimon. More, part i. cap. xi.

† Maximus Tyrius, dis i. p. 11.

8. Communication of what knowledge of God we have upon occasion. Talents improved increase, Luke xix. 17; increase in the act and increase by a reward. Let not what knowledge you have lie bound up in a rotten napkin as a useless thing, but venture it, and you will find a quick return. What knowledge of God we have laid out is lent to God, as well as what we give out of our purses to the poor, and God is no insolvent or careless debtor to his own promise: he hath bound himself to pay the less, and so he will the greater. We gain by imparting, as the husbandman flings his grain into the ground with hopes of an increasing crop.

9. Affect Christian society. Every Christian is a king and priest to God, and why not also a prophet to his brother? If a man will converse with divine persons, light will break in upon him as flame from a sparkling fire. He that would gain knowledge would converse with the best company. The daughters of Jerusalem were asked by the spouse for her beloved, when she was upon the pursuit to find him, Cant. v. 8. The meanest Christian may be of use in this. The lower plants have more of medicine in them than many taller shrubs; nay, Apollos has learned more of Christ from Priscilla than from the apostles themselves. God often blesseth the weaker above the stronger means, to shew that he is not tied to any.

Let me conclude all with the speech of a heathen, *O quàm contempta res est homo, nisi supra humana se erexerit!** If we would have life eternal, the way, by our Saviour's prescription, is to 'know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent.'

* Seneca, Præfat. ad Natural. Quest.

A DISCOURSE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IN CHRIST.

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.—JOHN XVII. 3.

THERE were two principal doctrines pitched on at the beginning of this discourse.

Doctrine I. The knowledge of God and Christ the Mediator is the necessary means to eternal life and happiness.

Doctrine II. The true and saving knowledge of God is only in and by Christ.

God and Jesus Christ. {Some make an hendiadis here, for 'God in Christ.' As 2 Peter i. 2, 'Through the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ,' *i. e.* through the knowledge of God in Christ; and, ver. 3, 'hath given us all things pertaining to life and godliness,' *i. e.* to a godly life; and, ver. 4, who hath 'called us to glory and virtue,' or *δία*, 'through glory and virtue,' *i. e.* through a glorious power. So Ps. xcvi. 7, 'Give unto the Lord glory and strength,' *i. e.* the glory of his strength. Gen. iii. 16, 'I will multiply thy sorrow and thy conception,' *i. e.* thy sorrow in thy conception, or of thy conception. To know God in Christ his ambassador. To know God the Father in Christ the mediator, the Father being considered here as God, and Christ as mediator. To know God as Christ hath declared him, as he speaks, ver. 6, 'I have manifested thy name.'

Since the lapse of human nature, no man that understands his fallen condition can have any knowledge of God from the book of the creatures and the dictates of nature but what is terrible without a mediator; and all notions of God out of Christ are below him, many times unworthy of him, and foul and undecent in themselves. Christ asserts it, Mat. xi. 27, 'All things are delivered to me of my Father, and no man knows the Son but the Father, neither knows any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.' All things were first delivered to Adam in the creation, viz. the knowledge of God and rectitude of nature, to be by him transmitted to his posterity. But since Adam so foolishly and wickedly threw it away for a little pleasure, he rendered himself and his posterity incapable to know and enjoy God.* God therefore pitches upon Christ in

* Chemnit. Harm. ex Athanasio.

his secret counsel, and stored up in him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, to shoot his beams through him upon man, and convey by him those good things which Adam had made himself by his fall incapable to communicate to his posterity. When our Saviour saith universally, all things are delivered to him, he instanceth in none but the knowledge of God as the foundation of all those rich communications which men receive from him, for without the revelation of God the Father to man, man would be incapable to partake of those riches intended for him by the mediation and interposition and furniture of the Son of God; and therefore, John iii. 35, when it is said, 'The Father hath given all things into his hand,' it follows, 'He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life.' The end why all things are given into his hand, is to convey to man such a knowledge of God that men might be induced to believe in Christ, and in God through Christ. Between the Father and the Son there is a communion of knowledge. None knows the Son but the Father, none knows the Father but the Son; none makes known the Son, and what things he hath delivered into his hand, but the Father by the Spirit; and none knows the Father, and his mind and affections to man, and the relations his nature and perfections bear to him, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him by the outward preaching of the word, and the inward illumination of his Spirit. And upon this Christ makes a general invitation, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;' that labour under, and are heavy laden with, your ignorance and darkness in the things of God, as well as with other miseries, and I will give you such a revelation and knowledge of the Father wherein you shall find a rest and complacency. Another place is John xiv. 9, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,' where Philip, in his desiring of Christ to shew him the Father, takes it for granted that the knowledge of the Father was only to be expected by and from Christ. Though he discovers his infirmities in his petition, implying that the Father was to be seen with corporeal eyes, 'Shew us the Father and it sufficeth us,' Christ answers with a reproof for his ignorance and inadvertency, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.' The Son hath rendered the Father spiritually visible in his person; his excellency, majesty, and unexpressible kindness to man, shine forth in Christ as a lively and clear image, and there is so exact a resemblance and so near a conjunction that, as he speaks, ver. 7, 'If we know Christ we know the Father also,' because Christ hath revealed him by his doctrine and word, and the holiness, righteousness, tenderness of God are made visible in the transaction of Christ, and God is represented in the person and doctrine of Christ more clearly than in all the apparitions and evidences of himself to the patriarchs and prophets.

One place more; 2 Cor. iv. 4, 6, Christ is said to be the 'image of God,' and that God 'had shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' Where the apostle expresseth two things: 1, that Christ is the image of God; 2, that the knowledge of the glory of God, or the glorious God, is discovered in the face or person of Christ. He is the image of God; he is indeed the essential image of God, the natural image of God, possessing in one essence with the Father all the glories and perfections of the Deity. A substantial and permanent image, not vanishing as that in a glass; a natural image, as the image of a father in his son, who hath the lineaments of the father by participation from him, not as the image of a prince in his coin, which is artificial. Substantial image of God, not in regard of likeness, for every thing that is like another is not said to be the image of that thing which it is like, but that which

bears a figure impressed by another, and expresseth that whose figure it is, as one man may be like another, yet is not said to be the image of another, as a son is said to be the image of his father. Not such an image as man is, who is rather said to be *created according* to the image of God than to be the image of God; such an image as in creation was like to God, not one with God. Christ is such an image of God, as if shining upon the soul in the gospel, can turn the heart, which man, though the image of God, cannot perform. Christ is therefore the image of God, as a child is the image of his father, not in regard of the individual property which the father hath distinct from the child, and the child from the father, but in respect of the same substance and nature, derived from the father by generation. Christ is here called the image of God, not so much, saith Calvin, in relation to God, as the Father is the exemplar of his beauty and excellency, as in relation to us, as he represents the Father to us in the perfections of his nature, as they respect us and our welfare, and renders him visible to the eyes of our minds. And the Jews did often give this title to the Messiah.* So that in the sight of Christ we see God, as in the sight of the stamp upon wax we see what is engraven upon the seal, which answers to it in exact proportion.

Christ God-man is the image of God, because the humanity is taken into personal union with the Son of God. His humanity abstractedly considered was no more the image of God than Adam was by creation.† And he is so the image of God, that whosoever hath seen him and known him, hath seen and known the Father also, which cannot be said of a picture, for he that sees a picture cannot be said to see the object represented by the picture, which expresseth only the outward figure, form, and lineaments. But he is such an image as represents the nature, features, attributes, and inward virtues of God. A picture is but a shadow, but Christ is a substantial image of God, wherein the divinity dwells bodily, Col. ii. 9.

There is also a discovery of God in the face of Christ. Since the divine nature falls not under the perceptions of sense, nor can be immediately known in itself by the understandings of men; it shines forth and sparkles † in the face of Christ, and diffuseth itself about the world. By knowing Christ, who is man, we know God; § because the human nature of Christ is personally assumed by the Son of God. As he that sees the body of a man, sees the man consisting of soul and body, because the soul and body are united together and make one composition, though the soul in itself be invisible; so he that sees the human nature of Christ is rightly said to see God, because the human and divine nature are personally united in Christ, though the divinity itself be invisible; and indeed, we cannot conceive any other sight and knowledge of God in heaven, but in Christ. The vision of Christ in his glorified human nature, is a seeing of God face to face; so that whosoever sees Christ with his bodily eyes, or with the eyes of his mind, sees God; he sees and knows God, not immediately and directly, but mediately and consequently. As the prophets were said to see the Lord: 1 Kings xxii. 19, Micaiah 'saw the Lord sitting upon his throne; and Isa. vi. 1, 'I saw the Lord upon his throne.' They saw not God immediately, but in those forms wherein he was pleased to appear as the symbols of his presence: and as John Baptist saw the Spirit of God, Mat. iii. 16, in the form of a dove; not the person of the Holy Ghost, but in the form wherein he appeared, yet is said to see the Spirit of God; the Father and the Son, having one nature and essence, when the Son is known the Father is known.

* אִלָּם לֹא.—Grotius in loc.

† Bayns on Col. i. 15, pp. 75, 76.

‡ Ἰσοραπαὶς ἀφ' αὐτοῦ.—Theod.

§ Gerhard, Harm. in John xiv. 9, p. 909., Col. i.

1. All the knowledge that any man hath of God, is from and by Christ. Every man that hath any saving light, hath it derivatively from him; he is 'the light that enlightens every man that comes into the world,' John i. 9. Every man that is enlightened, is enlightened by him. No other light can expel that darkness which is upon our minds in relation to God, but this light. What knowledge any man hath of God by reason and natural light, is by the mediation of Christ, whereby are kept up in men whatsoever gifts they had by their fall forfeited; and whatsoever saving knowledge any man hath of God, is by the special illumination of this true light by the virtue of his Spirit. Neither our natural reason is the true light, because it is blind in spiritual things; nor the word is the true light, because it cannot make men savingly intelligent without the shining of this true light upon them. And this the church expected by the Messiah: Hosea vi. 3, 'Then shall we know the Lord, at his going forth prepared as the morning;' when he 'shall come as the rain, as the former and the latter rain;'* when he shall instil into us the divine doctrine, and open our hearts as the rain doth the womb of the earth. We shall then know, when he shall come to teach men the ways of life, as a Jew expounds it.

2. No man hath, can have, or ever had, any knowledge of God without Christ: John i. 18, 'No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.' Which is asserted by John Baptist against the Jews, who boasted much of Moses his sight of God, and knowledge of his secrets. No man hath seen God from the first creation of the world to this day, not a man of all the patriarchs and prophets ever knew God but by the revelations of Christ. By seeing, we must not understand a corporeal sight, for no man ever did or can see God with his bodily eyes, but an intellectual or spiritual vision, which the antithesis, 'But he hath revealed him,' manifests. Christ is only capable to declare to us the nature and counsels of God, because he is his only Son, had an intimate communion with him; was, and is continually in his bosom, wherein the secrets of God were laid up, and was before the world interested in his secret counsels, and knew the bottom of all. He hath expounded his will, unfolded his nature, *Ἐξηγήσατο*. None else can reveal him, nor can the revelations of any inferior to him in this privilege challenge a full credit with any man. Moses himself saw God only in Christ; he was put in a hole of the rock, Exod. xxxiii. 22, which, in the judgment of the ancients, and some moderns, was a figure of Christ. None can see and know God but in this rock Jesus; the name which God then proclaimed is only declared by Christ: John xvii. 6, 'I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me.' And that which we call the light of nature, and the light of the law, is gathered up and centred in Christ; as that light which was in the world before the fourth day of the creation was gathered and embodied in the sun, and from thence flowed to the world. All the light was created to be brought into that body, and to flow from thence upon the several parts of the world, and to be communicated from thence to other creatures; so that there is no clear light in the world but from and by the sun, and no clear light of the knowledge of God but from and by Christ. Some therefore make the sun a natural type of Christ. As the sun was created the fourth day of the creation, so Christ was incarnate about the four thousandth year of the world, the fourth divine day, a thousand years being as a day in God's sight. All light was only to flow from it; and indeed all the light of the knowledge of God that ever was did spring from Christ.

* Where the word which signifies the latter rain, *יורה*, signifies also a teacher.

None ever knew God by his own strength and natural abilities, but as they were kept up and animated by the mediator.

And, by the way, we may observe, that the knowledge of God is more than the knowledge of the will of God. 'He hath declared him.' Christ declared more than the will of God, as it was a rule of obedience; he declared God's perfections as a ground of the creature's confidence, as an incitement to admiration, and a motive to obedience. He declared not only the will of God, what we are to do; but the intention of God, what we are to hope for; the glory of God, what we are to adore and admire.

In the prosecution of this, we shall shew,

I. What kind of mediums there have been to know God, and how they come short of this.

II. That the saving knowledge of God is attained only by the knowledge of Christ.

III. The necessity of this medium.

IV. What knowledge of God is discovered to us by Christ.

V. The Use.

I. What kind of mediums there have been to know God, and how they come short of this way of knowledge.

1. There is a natural knowledge of God.

(1.) By implanted notion. Some question whether there be any natural knowledge of God imprinted upon man, or the knowledge of any one thing naturally planted in him; but as he grows up (say they) he acquires a knowledge of things from the objects of sense, and improvement of them by the understanding he is endowed with; and making deductions and conclusions by the help of reason, arrives to an apprehension of things. Yet this knowledge of God may be called natural, because, by the view of the visible things in the world, natural reason frames a certain conclusion that there is a God, the cause of those excellences he sees in the creatures. But the Scripture seems to intimate a notion of God in the minds of men: Rom. i. 19, 'That which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath shewn it unto them;' a notion within, an excitation of it by objects without, that there is an internal light which doth manifest him, as well as an external evidence of him by the creatures. But whether this be the import of this scripture or no, most understand no more by manifest *in* them, than manifest *to* them; yet, since there is a law of nature in men, which is the rule of the excusings or accusings of the conscience, in regard of which they are said to be 'a law to themselves,' Rom. ii. 15, 'and the work of the law,' said to be 'written in their hearts,' the notion of a superior power to which man is accountable for his actions must be as natural as that, because it is the foundation of the actings of conscience; and the superstructure being from an implanted light, is not like to be without a foundation of the same kind. To what purpose should conscience accuse, if there were not a supreme being under whose censure such actions did fall? and since the heathens had a natural sentiment, that the extravagances they were guilty of were worthy of death, Rom. i. 32, they must also have as natural a sentiment that there was a judge of absolute power to inflict that death upon them, which their own consciences told them they were worthy of. Since there are, therefore, natural agitations of conscience raised up by the law of nature within them, the notion of a God seems to me to be as natural as that law of nature, and those motions of conscience. And though this was more clear in man at his creation, and while he remained in the state of innocency, yet it is not blotted out of the mind of man. Though the notions of God in men are

dimmed by the fumes of their corruption, yet they cannot stifle this inward light and impression, any more than the thickest fogs can blot out the sun, or hinder it from making day. And all the outward objects which we see in the world, whence we argue that there is a God, seem only to revive and awaken that implanted notion which lay covered with the rubbish of the fall. For, upon the first view of things, with what ease doth this sentiment rise up in our minds? And nothing is more obvious, nothing more easily entertained, than this, that there is a God, and that this God is a mighty, powerful, and perfect being; which evidenceth that there is a spark of it in the mind of man, which catches the outward flame so quickly upon its approach, as the snuff of a candle, not quite extinguished, will snatch and attract the flame of another which comes near unto it.

(2.) By the creatures. The visible world, and every part of it, is a book, wherein we may read some syllables of God.* The heathens saw God in heaven, earth, fire, water, plants, and animals; all creatures being lines drawn from that centre. Though man hath not the knowledge which Adam had, since the flaw he contracted upon his understanding, yet there being some scattered relics of this knowledge, he may, by looking near to the creatures, discern, by his purblind and dim sight, something of the attributes of God, every creature being a glass which reflects some beams of God upon his mind; for no man in his wits can conclude that the world was made by chance, but by some being more wise than any being in the world can be, or than all the wisest men in the world put together. We know the courage, conduct, and power of a general by the sight of his conquests, the skilfulness of an artificer by the excellency of his work, and the eloquence of an orator by reading his speech, though we never saw the faces of any of them. There are very few attributes but the works of creation and providence discover in some measure to us; for 'the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead,' Rom. i. 20. These two perfections are clearly seen: his infinite power, which discovers also his eternity; and his incomprehensible goodness, which is the most signal glory of the divinity.† The beauty of the world acquaints us with the excellency of him that erected it, and the order of the world instructs us in the wisdom of him that composed it. This discovery hath been ever since the creation; 'from the creation of the world;' from the time the world and the things therein were first created. He imprinted some letters of himself upon this frame of things, at the first rearing of it, wherein they have been ever since legible; you may see by the letter whose print it was, and what skill he had who made the impression. Thus God brings the creatures successively upon the stage to Job, and reads a natural history of them; he sends him to consider the foundations of the earth, the bridled vastness of the sea, &c., Job xxxviii.—xl.

[1.] The *power* of God is evident: in bringing forth a fair world out of nothing, which manifests an infinite strength; in packing together all parts for conveniency of life and motion, in so little a creature as a fly and ant; in stretching out the heavens like a curtain, laying the beams of his chambers in the waters; in setting bounds to the mighty waters, that they turn not again to cover the earth.

[2.] The *wisdom* of God: in the order, variety, and beauty; in the great resemblances of reason in some little creatures, as the ants and bees, which could hardly be supposed to have bodies capable of spirits, for managing

* Jupiter est quodcunque vides, quodcunque movetur.—*Lucan.*

† Amyraut. Paraph.

those tasks they naturally undertake ; in the ordering everything to a particular and general end ; the subserviency of one creature to another ; the constant order they observe in their motions, as if they were sensible of a law, and were rational observers of it. The moon is appointed for seasons, and the sun knows his going down ; the observation of which drew from the psalmist that admiration, ' O Lord, how manifold are thy works ! in wisdom hast thou made them all,' Ps. civ. 24—a lecture of the creation.

[3.] The *goodness* of God. ' The earth is full of his riches,' Ps. civ. 24, full of the goodness of the Lord : in communicating to every creature various endowments for their usefulness to one another, and furnishing them with abilities to attain their ends (every providence is a witness of this attribute, Acts xiv. 17) ; in the plentiful provision he hath made for his creatures ; in causing ' the grass to grow for the cattle, and herbs for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth.' Whosoever was the cause of the creation, must have understanding, will, and power : understanding to contrive, will to resolve, and power to perform. Wisdom is the product of the understanding, goodness communicates the fruit of the will, power executes and brings the contrivance and resolve into act.

[4.] The *immutability* of God may be known by the creatures. Since every creature, the more subject to change, the more it partakes of imperfection, God, the cause of all, must be immutable, otherwise he would want that perfection which is in the sun and heavenly bodies, wherein no change hath been observed.

[5.] His *eternity*, which is inseparable from infinite power. He must be before what was made by him in time.

[6.] His *omniscience*. He must know everything exactly which he hath made, and nothing in his creatures can be hid from him ; as a workman knows every part and motion of his work.

[7.] His *sovereignty*. In the obedience his creatures pay to him, in observing their several orders, and moving in the spheres wherein he set them.

[8.] The *spirituality* of God. Because he is not visible ; and the more spiritual any creature in the world is, the more pure it is. Besides, if God were a body, he would be compounded of various parts, and the parts would be in order of nature before the whole, and God would depend upon those parts.

[9.] The *sufficiency* of God for himself. Since all creatures had a beginning, God had no need of creating them ; for being from eternity before the world, he had no more need of it in time than he had before time.

[10.] His *majesty*. In the glory and lustre of the heavens, which are his throne, Isa. lx. 1, and a clear looking-glass to represent in their essence, magnitude, and motion, not only the being but the glory of God, more majestically than any earthly creature.

From all which may be concluded, the manner how God ought to be worshipped : as a mighty being, clothed with all those perfections as with a garment ; so that he cannot be represented by the image of any one creature. For since he hath made all, he cannot be limited by the perfections of any one, because he is the boundless fountain of the perfections of all. Nature, therefore, can never teach men to worship God in images, unless they were able to frame one in which they could gather and store up the perfections of all creatures ; and that is as impossible for any or all creatures to perform as to make a God. All this is as intelligible to a rational creature by nature, as the shining of the sun is visible ; the one is as evident in the works of creation to our reason as the other is to our

sense. All this may be known of God by the creation, and it is a true (though not a full) discovery of God. It is called truth: Rom. i. 18, 25, 'Change the truth of God into a lie.' We may as truly conclude all this of God, by the prospect of the creation, as a man might conclude the wisdom, power, and magnificence of the Romans, by the sight of their pyramids, theatres, statues, buildings, and other conveniencies in the city for the people;* for it is a rational way of arguing, from the excellency of the effect to the excellency of the cause, and from the perfection of the creature to the perfection of God. No man can behold the visible world, and take a view of the excellency of any creature, but must conclude an higher excellency in God; because it is impossible for that which is a solitary cause to give that to another which it doth not possess in itself, in a formal way, or a way of eminency; yet, because there is an imperfection in every creature, we must sift the flour of the creature from this bran, when we would frame any conception of the excellency of God by it. As we know the nature of the sea by a drop of water from it, yet we imagine the sea a great mass of those drops inconceivably vaster than a drop; so when we conceive of God according to any perfection in the creature, we add a purity, spirituality, and infiniteness to that perfection which we conceive.

(3.) By the nature of our souls. Had God made only man, and one small place for him to be in, without those ornaments of the world, he might have arrived to more knowledge of God by his own being, and make, and glossing upon his own nature, than by anything in the world. The soul being a spirit, and the noblest of all beings upon the earth, approaching nearest the nature of God, the contemplation of that renders God more intelligible to us than all material things, whose nature is more unlike to the nature of God. As the sun is more visible through a thin cloud than a thicker fog and veil which obscures it, there is more of God to be found in the little central point of the soul than in the large circumference of the world; † and a clearer impression of some great and inconceivable being is upon our souls than upon any creature under heaven; and whosoever will retire within himself, cannot but perceive some characters of a supreme being in his own nature. The soul was lighted by God, and created according to the image of God, and is the exactest image of God under heaven. ‡ By considering the nature of our own souls, we may come to some knowledge of the original and copy, as we have clearer apprehensions of the sun by the image of it imprinted upon a glass, or other transparent body, than we can have by any other creature, though the image of the sun be much less glorious than the sun itself, whose image it is. The mind of man can pierce every thing; it can conceive of angels, descend into the bottom of the deep, ascend to the battlements of heaven; it is not confounded by the mists of the air, or checked by the distance of the heavens. Command your mind to pass from one end of the world to the other, it will perform the order as soon as it is given. What is quicker than thought, which can skip from earth to heaven, from heaven to earth in a moment! Can there be a greater shadow of the omnipresence and immensity of God? The soul hath a memory to register actions and things done many years ago. It can bring out things new and old: what higher resemblance of the omniscience of God? It is not composed of the factious principles of elements. It hath not the dregs of matter mixed with it; in this it represents the spirituality of God. It is indefatigable in its motions; it is never tired in governing the body,—our bodies,

* Ochino Predict. par. ii. predic. ii. p. 5.

† The soul was therefore called by some philosophers *Deus in homine*.

‡ Τι ἄγαλμα Θεοῦ, a statue of God.

that are coarse pieces of earth, flag and languish when the soul remains vigorous; and this represents the indefatigableness of God's providence. It can subsist without the body; it doth not in all its motions depend upon it; it can reflect upon itself without it, view and please itself in its own perfections abstracted from the body, which shadows to us the self-sufficiency of God. Thus, as a landscape or draught of a great house or kingdom represents all the parts of that land or house, yet in a far less proportion than the house or territory is in itself; and when we see those models, we do not conceive the things represented to be of no bigger size than the pictures of them, but of a far greater proportion; so we may contemplate God in the model of our own souls, and since we know that we have understanding and will, we conclude that God hath understanding and will in a more transcendent manner, still enlarging to infiniteness in him what we observe of ourselves, when we transfer it to God. Yet though we may have so much knowledge of God by the creatures and by our souls, how little do we contemplate God! How far do we come short of this natural knowledge, and the improvement of it! How much shorter of the knowledge of God in Christ, which is infinitely more excellent and glorious! All the knowledge drawn from the creatures is insufficient to represent God. The knowledge of God by nature and creatures is necessary, as a foundation for higher apprehensions, and for turning to God. Men without it would be wholly brutish, and incapable of instructions in Christianity as an ox or a sheep; and though men deserved by sin to be deprived of this natural knowledge, yet God kept it up as a stock on which in time to engraft other principles in the discovery of Christ. All nature is incapable of discovering God in a full manner as he may be known. Nature, like Zaccheus, is of too low a stature to see God in the length and breadth, height and depth, of his perfections. The key of man's reason answers not to all the wards in the lock of those mysteries. The world at best is but a shadow of God, and therefore cannot discover him in his magnificent and royal virtues, no more than a shadow can discover the outward beauty, the excellent mien, and the inward endowments of the person whose shadow it is. All that a shadow will inform me of, is whether it be the shadow of a man or brute. It discovers something of God, not so much of him as to give the soul a full complacency; the fruit of it is but a thirst without a satisfaction.

[1.] Innocent nature could never have been, in that state, acquainted with the perfections of God, in such a manner as they are discovered in Christ.

(1.) Some perfections of God's nature could not have been known. Where had there been any place for the discovery of patience without a provocation, or for punitive justice without a transgression, or for pardoning mercy without an offence? There had been no occasion for the exercise of any of them, and therefore we cannot conceive how there could be a manifestation of them without objects convenient for them to be conversant about. Innocent man was the object of God's goodness, offending man only of his patience. Innocence is the subject of love, injury of anger. All those glorious eminences of God's nature had lain under a thick veil, impossible to be discerned by the eye of man. But those attributes were brought upon the stage by the entrance of sin, which was permitted to enter for the manifestation of them in and through Christ: Rom. v. ver. 15, 20, 'The law entered, that the offence might abound,' to make way for 'the abundance of grace.' Some attributes of God could not have been discovered by any proceeding of his, at least in such an height and eminency, but in Christ, as the wonders of his grace, the loud sounding of his bowels and compassions,

the purity of his holiness, and the dreadfulness of his justice. His creating perfections might have been seen by Adam and his posterity, his redeeming perfections are only displayed in his Son. The world as created was not capable of giving occasion for the manifestation of those attributes, but the world as fallen. The not being of the world gave occasion to God to manifest his glory as a creator, but the lapsed state of the world gave occasion to God to manifest his glory as a redeemer; for how could there be mercy shewn, if man's misery did not need it? How could there be vindictive justice, if man's transgression did not deserve it? How could there be a promise of restoration by the seed of the woman, if man's degeneracy did not want it? God had not been known in one letter of his name, as it is set down, *Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7*, but in the Redeemer. Not one tittle of his name there described had been known to the sons of men, had they continued in innocency, nor after the fall, but in and by Christ the mediator. It is in him he discovers himself a God 'merciful, gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness, forgiving iniquity, and by no means clearing the guilty,' but exacting satisfaction to his offended justice for sin. As though God was infinitely happy in himself, yet this happiness could not have been discovered to any but himself, unless he had made creatures wherein to display his goodness, and no being could have known him but himself, if there had been no being besides himself; so without Christ, God had not been known in his redeeming perfections, because there had been no basis for the discovery of them, they had lain wrapped up in darkness from the creature; and as they were a mystery hid from ages till the discovery of Christ, so they had without him remained hid for ever from the notice of the world. And as those attributes had not been discovered, so the creature's duty in relation to them could not have been exercised. God had wanted the manifestative glory of his pardoning grace, and man had had no occasion to return a thankfulness to God for it. He could not have humbled himself under God's displeasure, had there not been an occasion to manifest his anger; nor could the infinite sufficiency of God for his creature have been known, nor prayers directed to him by his creatures for relief. Nature could discover no more than what was imprinted on it by the God of nature; the world stood in no need of redemption by virtue of its creation, but by virtue of its transgression and pollution.

(2.) Some perfections of God's nature could not have been so clearly and fully known. The creation was but the first draught of God's perfections, and came much short of the full declaration; as the first limning of a picture doth of expressing the features and beauty of the original, till the second and third draught, when the last hand is put, and all the lines completed. Though there were manifestations of God's power, wisdom, and goodness in the creation, yet not in such splendour as the occasion of bringing forth Christ into the world did administer for the illustrating of them. These attributes looked upon the world through a veil and lattice, but were not seen in their full lustre till the coming of Christ drew the veil, and set them forth in their richest beauty. Here was infinite power in its strength going forth like a giant to run its race, God's power over himself manifested, wisdom in a knot of royal designs, and goodness opening its richest treasures. The holiness of God could not have been clearly known: while man did not know what sin was, he could never have strong conceptions of the mighty hatred of God against it. Man had some understanding of it by God's threatening, but he could not have such clear notices of it by his commination, as upon the entrance of sin by the execution, and that upon our Saviour. Nor had the veracity of God been so evident. It would have been known but in the

half, or on one side, in the making good his promise upon man's obedience, but never would have been understood experimentally (which is the clearest and most infallible way of knowledge) in his threatening, unless sin had invaded the world, and so had given occasion to the manifestation of God's truth to his word of threatening, as man's persisting in an unerring and unspotted obedience would have given only occasion to manifest his truth to his word of promise. These virtues of God were in the creation like a lovely diamond under a piece of linen, which emits some sparklings, but is not discerned in its full lustre till the covering be removed. Christ drew the veil from them, and manifested them in their fullest glory. The angelical nature had no prospect of these things we have spoken of, by their standing before the face of God, but by the discovery of them to the church in their great head, Eph. iii. 10. And it is likely, from that and other places, that though they had a notice of the redemption of man by the first promise of the seed of the woman made to man, and by the glorifying some of mankind, and the providences of God in the world, yet they were ignorant of the great ways and methods of it, till they came upon the stage in the discovery of the Son of God's taking miserable flesh to die in it; so incapable is the best created nature to discern the glory of God without the face of Christ.

(3.) Innocent nature could never arrive to a full knowledge of God's nature by the attributes discovered in creation, without some further revelation of him. The whole creation was the work of God's hands, but no work can fully express the nature of the artificer. We may know by a watch, or clock, or a curious piece of tapestry, that the workman was skilful in his art, that a more exact piece never came out of any hand; but by his curiosity in his work, we cannot give a description of his person and disposition, without other acquaintance with him. We can know nothing of God by the creatures, but as they stand in the relation to God as effects to their cause, and when the cause doth much transcend the effect, the clearest understanding cannot, by the knowledge of the effect, arise to a full knowledge of the cause. God is infinitely above the fruits of his power in the world; therefore, man in innocence could gain but little knowledge of him by a bare prospect of them. Nature discovers that there is a God, but not fully what that God is; nor doth the creation furnish man with a notion of God suitable to the excellency and immensity of his nature: as a blind man who hears a discourse of the light and heat of the sun, being brought under the beams of it striking hot upon his body, feels the warmth and knows there is such a thing men call the sun, and is sensible of some effects of it, but hath not a full conception of the enlightening nature of the sun, nor knows what the body of the sun is, nor what kind of shape it appears in; and if he should declare his conception of it, it would be strangely different from the true nature of the sun, a monstrous mistaken description of it, not suitable to that planet; nay, what man is there that sees the sun every day, that is able to say he fully knows the nature of it by his sight, or the constant influences which he feels from it? The conception of God is infinitely more above innocent reason than the conception of the sun can be above lapsed natural reason cracked by the fall. Since, therefore, all the creatures cannot be a ground for man to frame a true and right conception of God, what Adam had of this nature was more from revelation than contemplation of the works of God; and, since Adam was of the species of man, what knowledge he had of God above what the effect of his power in the world did discover, he had by revelation from God, since no man hath at any time seen or known God (taking in the beginning of time, as well as the succession of time), but

whatever intellectual vision any had of God, was by the declarations of the Son of God, John i. 18.

[2.] Corrupted nature is less able to know God by the creation, as he ought to be known, since the fall. Since no natural light was strong enough to discover the wonders of God, corrupt reason can attain but a faint knowledge. The providence of God, after the entrance of sin, displayed some of his attributes which could not be manifested in an innocent state, viz., his forbearance and his justice. God did witness his patience and goodness to men in giving them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, and 'filling their hearts with food and gladness,' while he 'suffered them to walk in their own ways,' Acts xiv. 16, 17. And many of the heathens were sensible of this goodness in some measure, when they observed how much the wickedness of the world deserved the contrary, though most of them, indeed, 'despised the riches' of it, Rom. ii. 8, 4. Now and then, some warning pieces of judgments were shot off, whereby the world was startled and made sensible of anger in God. He now and then shot his darts into the hearts of some, otherwise they would scarce have taken notice that there was a God that judgeth in the earth. But there was nothing in all their observation that could discover anything of God in Christ, the union of two natures, the doctrine of the trinity of persons, which was necessary to the notion of redemption, because there was to be a person satisfying, and a person to whom the satisfaction was to be offered, and by whom it was to be received; one considered as the rector, the other as the mediator. This transaction was a 'mystery hid in God from the beginning of the world,' Eph. iii. 9, and discovered to the Gentiles in the apostles' time, Col. i. 26, 27, 'Now made manifest to the saints;' not before, not a syllable of it communicated to nature; it had then been no more a mystery than any other thing that nature declares. There were, indeed, some confused notions among some of the prime philosophers of a trinity, and some prophecies among the Sybils applicable to the Redeemer. The latter might have some glimmerings by revelation, that thereby way might be made for the easier reception of the gospel by the Gentiles, when it should set foot in the world. The former, *i. e.* the philosophers, had also, from a converse with the Jews, into whose country some of them had travelled, or from the Jews which occasionally resided among them, or from the Phœnicians, which were the Philistines of Canaan, a trading people, who, by the neighbourhood of the Jews, might learn and discover some maxims of their religion; and there were also some of them acquainted with some parts of Scripture: nature cannot challenge anything in this affair. But the strength of their natural light was more seen in a knowledge of the duty of man to man, than in the searching out God in the duties we owe to him; whence there are many discourses extant of justice, temperance, prudence, and moral virtues, very few of God and his nature. And though men had by tradition some notice of a redeemer by the first promise, yet they were not able to conceive anything of the nature of God thereby, but that he was patient and gracious; but because they could not conceive how this work should be effected, they could not discern those other attributes of holiness, wisdom, mercy, justice, in their bright beams, till the discovery of Christ in the flesh and upon the cross. What knowledge men had by tradition from the first promise was quickly lost among the corruptions of the old world, and though revived in the legal ceremonies appointed to the Jews, yet they had not conceptions of the great intèndments of them.

The insufficiency of nature is seen,

[1.] In that by nature we cannot know the things of nature perfectly,

much less the author of nature.* If we know not the nature of the effects, how can we know the nature of the cause, which infinitely excels them? There hath been a dimness in the reason of man ever since the fall, in reference to those things which are before our eyes. We know not the world, of which we are parts; we know not ourselves, though we daily converse with ourselves; we understand not well the nature of our own souls, nor the reason of our own motions and actions; how then can nature help us to the understanding of the greater, when it doth not to the understanding of the less? How can we arise by the strength of nature to the understanding of infinite wisdom and power? If we are not able to arrive to such a knowledge of the creatures by weak nature, so as to give an essential definition of them; if the nature of a stone, sound, colour, doth pose us; if all the questions put to us about a fly cannot be answered: how much less are we able to come to the knowledge of God, with the strength which is too weak for the other? If we are nonplussed by creatures, much more by the Creator.

[2.] Had nature been able in this affair, or had reason been sufficient to know God and his counsels concerning us, what need of the mission of the Spirit? It is he only 'searcheth the deep things of God;' 'no man knows the things of God, but the Spirit of God;' and the end of his sending is, 'that we may know the things that are freely given us of God,' 1 Cor. ii. 3, &c. All the reason of the world would never have arrived to the discovery of those perfections of God, they being infinitely above us, as our notions and thoughts are above the reach of a beast, which is never able to apprehend the nature of a man, or understand the language of a man, whereby to come to a knowledge of him. Though reason puts us into a capability of entertaining the discoveries of him, without which neither outward declarations, nor inward impressions, could work anything upon us any more than upon a man remaining out of his wits, yet of itself it is not able to ascend to the conception of God without the Spirit of God. If men could have redeemed themselves, what need of the expense of the blood of Christ? So if men could have instructed themselves in this great knowledge, what need of the Spirit to lead us into the secret chambers of God? Wheresoever, therefore, any man knows God, and the things freely given him of God, *i. e.* the things of the gospel, wherein the excellency and liberality of God most illustriously appears, it is the gift of the Spirit; and where any man hath an inward and spiritual taste of those things, it is the grace of the Spirit in him.

[3.] We find the highest improved nature had strange and unworthy notions of God, and was ignorant of him. If the Athenians, the famous people in the world for learning, and therefore of more refined understandings, confessed their ignorance of God in the inscription of the Θεὸς ἀγνωστὸς upon the altar, Acts xvii. 23, how could more clouded nature come within ken of him? Though by reasoning they concluded there was a supreme being who had the superintendency of the world, yet they could not tell what this God was; and when the redeeming perfections of God were discoursed by the apostle to them, they were the subject of the Athenians' scoffs rather than inquiry, ver. 32. The hidden wisdom of God 'none of the princes of the world knew,' 1 Cor. ii. 8; not the governing princes, though they were as ignorant as the rest, but the princelike and towering wits of this world knew it not; and though God had displayed before their eyes the wonders of the world, and given them both in the creation, preservation, and government of the world, a multitude of lessons concerning his nature, which they might in some measure have discerned by a diligent observation, yet

* Charron trois veritez, lib. i. chap. v. pp. 19, 20, changed.

in the wisdom of God, those lessons of his wisdom in the creation and providence, they did not by natural wisdom and the use of their reason know him, 1 Cor. i. 21. Sometimes their notions of God were rank, and they framed a misshapen God, modelled according to their own humours, not the nature of a deity, who could not possibly be of that hue which they represented him to themselves in. Sometimes they counted him cruel and unjust, sometimes too fond and indulgent; some confined him to heaven, others acknowledged his providence in the greater affairs of the world, but concluded it unworthy of him to descend to take notice of the fall of a sparrow or the hairs of the head, and that it was a disturbance of God's rest to intermeddle with worldly affairs. They stepped out of the way of reason into the paths of fancy, measured God according to their own imaginations to accommodate their lusts, and lie more at ease soaking in their sins. It were endless to tell the monstrous thoughts their corrupt minds had of God, and the multiplicity of their idols, whereby they 'changed the truth of God into a lie,' Rom. i. 23-25, whereas they might have discerned, by a reasoning from those excellencies they saw in the creatures, that God was an infinite, eternal, wise, and self-sufficient being. And such monstrous conceptions of God, after the light of the gospel superadded to that of natural reason, do often flutter in the minds of men among us.

2. There was a knowledge of God by or under the law. Before the giving the law by Moses, God instructed men by the apparitions of angels, visions to some prophets, by the holiness of some of his eminent darlings; under the law, by figures and representations, which the wisest of them did but darkly understand, and that by the assistance of some special revelation, which was successively cleared by the prophets, enlightened in several ages to that purpose. The moral law was a discovery of God, chiefly in his sovereignty, holiness, and justice; he enacts laws as a sovereign, righteous laws against sin as a holy one, annexeth threatenings and promises as a judge. In regard of the majesty of God in the discovery, the people were afraid of death at the promulgation: Exod. xx. 19, 'Let not God speak with us, lest we die.' And Moses, who was the most familiar person with God in the world, had not a less fright at the discovery of it: Heb. xii. 21, 'So terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake.' The knowledge of God in the law was too terrible for the minds of men, and surprised Moses, the friend of God, the interpreter of his will, with an extreme horror. God here manifested the marks of his greatness and his justice, armed with instruments of punishment for sin. There was not a mite of his mercy discovered by the law, but to those that kept his commandments, *i. e.* to those that were without any guilt and crime; upon which account the apostle calls the law, the 'ministry of condemnation' and 'of death;' and a killing, not a healing letter; a sword to cut, not a balsam to close a wound, 2 Cor. iii. 7-9. Nothing of adoption and justifying grace pronounced in it. The holiness of God was discovered in his precepts, and his justice in his threatenings. There was also a daily prospect of the holiness and justice of God in the sacrifices exacted of man, in the groans, gaspings, and blood of beasts; they saw that sin was neither affected by God, nor would be suffered to remain unpunished; and their sight of those attributes in this ministration was greater than the world could have of them by the now and then sprinklings of judgments, which, being not often upon the worst of sinners, staggered the understandings, not only of the heathens, but of some of the intelligent Israelites, in their conceptions of the nature of God and his providence. But what was all this to the fuller discovery of the purity of his nature, and the terror of his wrath in the execution of the

curses of the law upon the Son of his bosom? All preceding times were times of darkness till the coming of Christ; they were but the shadows of the night in the figures of the law; but the morning light was in the rising of the gospel, Hosea vi. 3. This was a sufficient revelation of God to direct them to Christ, who could only render God visible and intelligible to man; but how insufficient in regard of the corruption of man's nature to imprint right notions of God! How often did the Jews warp and wallow in the sink of idolatry, notwithstanding this revelation of God! Much less sufficient is the knowledge of God by nature.

This natural, legal, and evangelical knowledge by Christ differ,

(1.) In regard of clearness.

[1.] Natural knowledge was dim. In the creation, God writ himself in hieroglyphics, in short characters; in Christ, in a plain and legible hand, which gave a substantial discovery of God. The power, majesty, and wisdom of God appeared in the 'heavens, the work of his fingers,' Ps. viii. 3, in maintaining their influences and conducting their motions. The foundations of the earth, the vastness and rollings of the sea, the habitations of light, the treasures of snow, floods of rain, the bottles of the clouds, order of the stars, provision for creatures on the earth, direct us to the knowledge of a great and glorious being. For upon all those God reads a lecture of himself to Job in the latter chapters.* That there is a God, may be seen in the dust of the earth, as well as in the brightness of the heavens; but by those works men saw little else but that there was a God: they could know but little of his nature, congruous to the state wherein they were. That glow-worm light could afford us at best but weak and languishing notions of God, and a relation to him fit for that miserable condition wherein the fall of Adam had involved us. And by reason of man's negligence, and not improving a number of those instructions concerning the nature of his virtues, which the creation furnished them with, and which they might have attained by a wise observation of that which God had revealed in his creation, preservation, and government of the world, they gave the bridle to their own imaginations, and knew as little of God by his works, as beasts know of the nature and reason of a man. The world, therefore, is called by some *anigma Dei*, and indeed the heathens often erred in their interpretation of it, and could not unriddle God in the creatures, but worshipped the creature for the Creator.

[2.] Legal knowledge was also dim. Though the temple, with all the ceremonies attending it, was a clearer representation of the nature and will of God than the whole frame of the world, yet obscurity was of the nature of the legal state; and the glory of God was wrapped up in a cloud of animal sacrifices, so that Solomon calls the house wherein God then dwelt, 'a thick darkness,' 1 Kings viii. 12. The law was given with smoke as well as thunders, obscurity as well as terror, Exod. xx. 18. The Israelites were under a cloud, 1 Cor. x. 1, and the mediator of the law had a veil upon his face, and the glory of God was so enveloped in clouds, that the Israelites could but dimly discern. There was more of shadows than substance, and the apostle in the Hebrews gives it no better a title than that of a shadow, opposing it to Christ the substance. And the gospel is said to be truth and grace, in opposition to the law, as if there were no truth and grace in that former dispensation, John i. 17. None, indeed, in comparison of the clearness of the revelation in the gospel; though in itself it was a true representation of God, as a shadow may be called a true shadow. The law being composed of shadows could not discover God as the gospel did, which was

* Κοσμικὰ φέγγματα.—*Jamblichus*.

made up of substance. Moses then did see his back parts, perhaps in the figure of a man, but in the gospel God shews himself 'in the face of Christ,' 2 Cor. xiv 7. That did discover the features of God more clearly than the works of nature; as the form and beauty of a man may be more discerned through grates and lattices, to which God's appearance in the law is likened, Cant. ii. 9, than when covered with a thick veil. Very few of them could have a ken of the substance for the multitude of shadows. If we, upon whom the glory of God hath shone in the gospel, are not able to comment upon every one of those figures, much less could they who never saw the antitype, and could not conceive the analogy between them.

[3.] The evangelical discovery of God by Christ is clearer. The brightness of the day dispelled the shadows of the night, and dispersed the clouds wherewith the sun was masked. As the fulness of the Godhead dwelt personally in Christ, so the fulness of the divine perfections sparkled in the actions and sufferings of Christ. The Deity shines out in a clear lustre, which was seen before only in the dusty clouds of creatures and ceremonies. In nature, we see God as it were like the sun in a picture; in the law, as the sun in a cloud; in Christ, we see him in his beams, he being 'the brightness of his glory, and the exact image of his person,' Heb. i. 3: as the rays of the sun, being the production of the sun, cause us by their lustre to see and understand more of the beauty and brightness of the sun; and the stamp upon the wax informs us what is upon the seal. We see what an infinite fountain of good God is, and what a dreadful thing sin is, which is a separation from him; as by the beams of the sun we understand the beauty of light, and the horror of darkness. Though it be not discerned in its glory through a mist of vapours, yet it may be known to be risen, and some effects of it are sensible to us. So it was in the creation and the law; but in Christ those vapours are dissolved, the clouds dispersed, and God appears in the sweetness and beauty of his nature, as a refreshing light. The creatures tell us that there is a God, and Christ tells who and what that God is.

So that the clearness of this knowledge consists

(1.) In the clearness of the medium. Nothing in the world can strike our sense or influence our minds, but by some medium. Though a man hath the sharpest eye, yet without an enlightened air he can behold nothing. The clearer the glass through which we look, the clearer discerning we have of the object we look upon. Christ is the clearest medium. As he is said to be 'a polished shaft in God's quiver,' Isa. xlix. 2, to pierce the heart by his grace; so he may be said to be a polished glass in his hand, to represent his majesty, and reflect the beams of God stronger upon us. The gospel, therefore, in the judgment of some, is meant by the 'sea of glass,' Rev. xv. 2, in regard of the transparency of it, through which we see God, and his perfections. It was the same God, Jehovah, who was known by the Jews, and under the gospel, but not in the same manner; they had the same faculties, but not the same light to discern the object. The faculty and act of vision is the same by sun-light and star-light; we have the same eyes in the day and the night, the same exercise and rollings of the eye; but not having the same clearness of the air, we have not that contentment in the exercise of our eyes. Things appear not so beautiful by candlelight as in the lustre of the day; hence Christ is called a 'Sun of righteousness,' Mal. iv. 2, as manifesting the righteousness of God, diffusing light and health by his wings or beams, and chasing away by his splendour the darkness of the world, and opening the glories of heaven to the sons of men, directing them to the knowledge of God, who before wandered in darkness. The coming of this light, and the rising of the glory of God upon us, are

knit together: Isa. lx. 1, 'Thy light is come, and the glory of God is risen upon thee.' The glory of God, *i. e.* the mercy and goodness of God, which is his glory, say some; the glory rather of all his attributes, which Christ is the medium to clear up to the minds of men. And indeed there is as great a difference between the knowledge of God by Christ, and the knowledge of God by the creatures and the law, as there is between the knowledge of a man by his footsteps, and the knowledge of him by his image. Christ is 'the image of the invisible God,' Col. i. 15, as a son is the image of his father, who is a better medium to know a father by, than his footsteps or his picture. Never an earthly son was so like his father, as Christ is like God the Father; he hath the same essence, the same attributes, the same operations.

(2.) The nearness of the object. Christ brings God near to us; he is Immanuel, God with us, God in our nature. The great comforting promises in the Old Testament were, that God should dwell among them, Joel iii. 17, Mal. iii. 1. God was not far from every one of us in the creation, Acts xvii. 27, in regard of his being, in regard of his goodness, though he was far from us in regard of a satisfactory knowledge of his nature; as when a man is at a distance from us in regard of any particular knowledge of him, yet he is near to us in regard of our knowledge of his existence and species, that he is a man, though we cannot perceive his shape and features, and what kind of man he is; but when he approacheth nearer, he appears greater, we see his dimensions and discern his age, yet obscurely; but when he comes close to us, we see him plainly, and by converse with him we come to know his temper.* Now, this man is one and the same man we saw at a distance, and we see near; he hath the same shape, the same features and disposition, but he appears in a different manner according to the greatness of the distance. God was the same in all ages of the world, but after he departed to a greater distance from man by reason of sin, and refrained converse with man, there were but small glimmerings of him in the creatures, and less to be discerned by the distempered eye of man.† He came nearer in the law, but that representation was obscure, and fitted more to the carnal conceptions of men; whence the apostle calls it 'the rudiments and elements of the world,' consisting in sensible representations of him, Col. ii. 20, Gal. iv. 3. Christ succeeded (in whom God came near to us, and conversed with us), as a prospective glass, which makes that which is afar off to seem near at hand, and manifests it in its dimensions; by him we can look through the veil, and be informed of the transactions in heaven between the Father and the Son on our behalf.

(3.) Fulness of the discovery. What was known before is better known; the knowledge is better for quality, greater for quantity. For by the light diffused by Christ in the world, since the ascension of the Redeemer, and the descent of the Comforter, the simplest believer comprehends more of the glorious nature of God in his understanding, than the most elevated believer in the time of the law, either by the figures of the law, or the features of the creatures could, with the assistances of the most learned doctors of the one, or philosophers in the other, which our Saviour verifies in the eulogy he gives of him that is least in the kingdom of God, *i. e.* in the gospel state, magnifying him above John Baptist, whom he confesseth, at the same time, superior to all that went before him, and indeed knew more than all the prophets, yet was inferior to the meanest believer under the New Testament: ‡

* Castalio Dialog. p. 143.

† 'Ασθενῶσι γὰρ ὀφθαλμοῖς πολέμιος ἥλιος.—Theodor. in 2 Cor. iv. 4.

‡ Mestrezat. sur. 8 Heb. Sermon. 4, p. 424, much changed.

Mat. xi. 11, 'Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.' He indeed saw Christ in the flesh, beheld his person as the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world; knew him as the only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father, come into the world for the declaration of him: a sight and day which Abraham and the prophets desired to see, and could not obtain; yet he saw him not dying, rising, ascending, pouring out the rich gifts of his Spirit, all which did clear up the righteous, true, wise, gracious nature of God to the simplest believer, after the accomplishment of them, more than the knowledge of his incarnation could to John. He that is least and most ignorant in the kingdom of God, is greater, *i. e.* more intelligent than John; he hath a fuller prospect and a diviner light; he knows what John knew, and he knows what John was ignorant of: he hath seen and known the performance of those things, whereof John only knew the beginning. And this full and plain knowledge Christ promised before his departure: John xvi. 25, 'The time comes, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father;' a promise that receives its full accomplishment in the life to come, but respects the death, and resurrection, and ascension of Christ, as the time wherein it was to begin to be of force; for those things were nothing else but the declarations of the transactions between the Father and the Son. That it is meant of a declaration of the Father in this life is evident by the following words: ver. 26, 'At that day you shall ask in my name.' Earth is the place for wants and petitions, heaven for vision and praises. The whole scope of the doctrine of Christ is to reveal God in his most illustrious perfections to man, and in the relation of a gracious Father to him. Christ speaking in proverbs, is understood by one* of the whole time of the Mosaic dispensation, wherein Christ was the angel to lead them, and conversed with them in shadows and figures, but now in the gospel would plainly declare the Father to them. Natural and legal knowledge is clarified by the gospel, which is a comment to explain what was before but darkly understood, and a new revelation to elevate the soul to a greater understanding; it fortifies the light of nature, and frames in us more pure and significant conceptions of God.

Though there be a clearness of the medium, a nearness of the object, and a fulness of the discovery, yet,

(1.) We must understand it, not of such a clearness as is possible in its own nature to be (for there may be a more sensible manifestation of God), but of such a clearness as the present state in this world is capable of. It is so plain that it can only be superseded by the light of glory; it is the fullest that we can meet with in this world, till we come to behold him in that light wherewith he clothes himself as with a garment; and whatsoever discoveries many may expect, they must be all built upon this foundation. They are still but beams issuing out, in this scene of things, from the Lamb, who is the light of the new Jerusalem in the best estate: Rev. xxi. 23, 'The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.' Christ is still the medium through which the light of the glory of God conveys itself to the understandings of his creatures, and God will never be represented by any other light than his own. In his own light we see him who is the Father of lights.

(2.) Nor must we understand it of an absolute fulness of the knowledge of God. For the brightness of his nature is so great, that it cannot be fully known by a created understanding. The sun cannot be perfectly seen in the

* Ferus in loc.

brightest day, when it traverseth the heavens in its triumphant glories, and suffers not a vapour to waylay the beams he sends upon the earth; yet then he is clearer seen than when the air is clogged with vapours and overspread with clouds. This is a comparative clearness more than in the little print of creatures, or than through the screen of ceremonies; not such a clearness as shall be on the top of the mount in the eternal transfiguration of the soul; nor ever shall there be an absolute fulness of knowledge of all that is in God, for to know him as he knows himself, requires an understanding as infinite as his own.

(2.) They differ in the certainty. Natural knowledge of God is but conjectural. No position was so firm but some wits of the world found out arguments to contradict it. Nor was there wisdom enough in the world to untie all the knots that were made by others. The whole world of nature lay in darkness; it is from that term every man is called that comes to Christ: 1 Pet. ii. 9, 'He hath called us out of darkness;' and the devil, that is the ruler of the carnal world, is 'the ruler of the darkness' of it, Eph. vi. 12, spreading his fogs upon the minds of men. The heathens arrived to the knowledge of God by rational deductions; but the most eagle-eyed among them, who could peer into the secrets of nature, could not reduce their apprehensions to any fixedness. They had a vanity in their imaginations and conceptions of his nature, and as those our Saviour speaks of, though they agreed in the unity of the Messiah, yet differed about the person. One saith, Here is Christ; another, There is Christ; so these, God is this, and God is that, according to their particular fancies. They acknowledged him an admirable being, but rather darkened than unveiled him. Nothing was satisfactory to the understanding, many of them saw not the creating power of God; one fancies the world eternal; another conceives it to be compacted by a multitude of atoms, or small particles of dust, meeting together by chance, and kneading themselves into this frame we call the world. But the doctrine of faith discovers God in his power: Heb. xi. 3, 'By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.' It acquaints us that the world was created by him; which, indeed, the reason of many informed them of, but not of the manner of the creation, by his sole will, or by the second person, the essential Word of God. This we know by Christ, which we could not know by nature: as Heb. i. 2, 'He hath spoken to us by his Son, by whom also he made the worlds.' But, indeed, that is not the meaning of Heb. xi. 3, for the word is there *ῥήματι* not *λόγῳ*; the latter is a title of Christ, not the former; but it is clear from it, that, by the knowledge of Christ, we have a certain account of the manner of God's operations. The light of Christ is, as the light of the morning, stable.* It discovers things to us with as much certainty as the morning light doth the nature of the objects we doubted of in the darkness of the night. As the sense of vision is the most acute and exact sense, and extends further, and with more assurance, than that of hearing and smelling; so the knowledge of faith is the most infallible way of knowledge, it being built upon the revelation of the Son of God, who is the word of God, and the wisdom of God. It is therefore called 'the evidence of things not seen,' Heb. xi. 1, 'the substance of things hoped for.' It is not an imagination or a fancy, but a demonstration, more firm than any natural demonstration can be. It is a subsistence in the mind, as sure, and as it were as real, as the subsistence of the unseen things believed without us: an evidence as if the things not seen had not a being but by faith. To an unbeliever, God seems not to have that power, wisdom, holiness, which are really in his nature: the perfections of

* As the word *יָכֵן* signifies, as well as prepared, Hos. vi. 3.

God have no existence in the heart of such a man, so that he is without God, without the knowledge of God; an atheist in the world. Faith in Christ renders God as visible, as he was by the same grace to Moses: Heb. xi. 27, 'By faith he saw him who is invisible.' As the knowledge and faith of the ancient believers, under the figures of Christ, rendered God and the things of the New Testament visible to them, according to the measure of the revelation, so doth the knowledge of believers, under the New Testament, represent God and his perfections in a more certain manner visible to them, because the way of revelation is firmer: that from God by Moses; this from God by his Son. It is truth, because declared by 'the only begotten Son of God,' John i. 17, 18. And, upon the account of the greater sensibility of this knowledge under the gospel, it is the promise to the Jews, that 'then they shall know the Lord,' Jer. xxxi. 4. As though the knowledge of him in nature, and the knowledge of him under the law, had been a kind of ignorance in comparison of this, as it is indeed in regard of the clearness and certainty of this by Christ.

3. In nature, God is discovered for contemplation; in Christ, God is discovered to be embraced as well as admired. Nature never did, nor ever can, elevate one heart to a conformity to the holiness of God, because it could not make known his transcendent hatred of sin, and his rich condescending grace, as the discovery of Christ doth. If it cannot ken the mysteries of God, it can never conduct men to a holy compliance with God according to his nature. There is not a syllable of the naturalness of God's justice, and the necessity of a satisfaction of infinite value, in the whole book of nature. It discovers the existence of a God, but not the way of closing with God. Nature discovers a God of unconceivable excellency, but brings no saving message from him. It sets out God as a being to be adored, Christ sets out God as a being to be enjoyed. That presents notions of God to our minds, this imprints motions to God in our wills. Nature presents God in some of his creating glory, Christ presents God in his redeeming grace, with his arms open, his voice encouraging and directing his creatures to a way of fruition. Nature directs us to the admiration of God, because there is some resemblance of God in every creature; for whatsoever God hath created, he hath created according to his own *idea*, and with a print of his own goodness upon it. He at the first creation pronounced all things good, Gen. i. 31. But all created goodness is a participation of the divine goodness, and by consequence some kind of conformity to the divinity, and the more excellent any creature is, the stronger and fuller stamp it hath of the goodness and excellency of God; the consideration of which would rationally guide the mind to an acknowledgment of an infinite perfection in the author of them, but is unable to conduct men to a due compliance with God. Not that they have any greater insufficiency in themselves to perform the end for which they were created, than they had when they were first made; but because of men's inability to improve their natural instructions, since the crack of their rational faculties by the fall. The case is the same with them as with the law; the law hath the same virtue and power of direction and making men happy, as it had in the state of innocence, *i. e.* in itself; but man by his lameness, contracted by the fall, was unable to walk the pace of the law, and enjoy the blessings of it. The law was 'weak through the flesh,' Rom. viii. 3, not in itself. So the creatures are not unable of themselves to answer the end of their creation; but man, by reason of his darkness, is unable to make an improvement of what the creatures do dictate. Yet I cannot see that the whole book of nature presents us with that knowledge of God, which

is necessary for us in the present state wherein we are lapsed ; for they were created to serve man as innocent, not as an offender ; in which relation he stands now to God as a judge, and cannot know by all his natural learning, without revelation, what the nature of God is in this case, and what is necessary for him to do, worthy of God, for his restoration. Such a discovery of God and the way of compliance with him in such a manner as becomes God, in this relation, is only known by the revelation Jesus Christ hath made. Yet there is so much knowledge to be had of God by the creation, as to render men inexcusable before the divine tribunal. Though they never heard the sound of the gospel, they will be justly punished at last, not for the neglect of that which they never heard, but for their contradiction to the voice of their own consciences, the universal sound of nature, the lessons they might have learned from the whole creation, especially the heavens, which 'declare the glory of God ;' for the thwarting the first principles and notions implanted in their hearts, and damping those secret motions and touches they had by a manifestation of his common goodness to 'seek after God,' Acts xvii. 26, 27. The creation of the world, and the mercies men are indulged with, are that they might seek the Lord. For there is not a drop of rain or a fruitful season, but is a witness of a God to be sought after, Acts xiv. 16, 17. All this will render men inexcusable at the last day. All men have such relics of natural light, more than are due to a fallen nature, as will condemn them in their own consciences, though there is not enough to render them so intelligent of God, as is necessary for their recovery from their lapsed state. Christ only opens the heavens to let out the beams of God upon mankind, and opens the heart and understanding to receive them, and reflect them back upon God in those several duties required at man's hands in his present broken estate.

The second thing is,

II. That the clear knowledge of God is attained only by Christ. The full revelation of God was promised to be given out by the Messiah, the grand prophet God promised, upon the Israelites' desire that God might not speak immediately to them : Deut. xviii. 16-18, 'The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, &c. ; to him shall you hearken ;' intimating thereby, that a higher discovery was to be made by him of the mind of God. Why else should they be bound to hearken to him more than any other prophet ? He was to be 'a light to the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes,' Isa. xlii. 6, 7. God would call them in righteousness, according to the promise he had made to Abraham, and afterwards to the Israelites, of a great prophet, to take off the veil and darkness in regard of God, and remove their erroneous conceptions of God, whence he is called 'the light of the world ;' and ver. 8 seems to intimate, that the majesty of God and his name, and the incommunicableness of his attributes, were to be the subject of this discovery : 'I am the Lord, that is my name ; my glory will I not give to another ;' and John xvii., Christ asserts, that he had manifested the name of his Father, and would further declare it to the sons of men. So that the spring of all spiritual knowledge is in Christ : he is 'made wisdom' to us, 1 Cor. i. 30 ; from him we draw all sorts of spiritual understanding and revelation ; by him we have the illumination of our minds, as well as the justification of our persons, the sanctification of our natures, and redemption from our enemies. He is the mirror that represents to us the perfections of God, being the brightness of his glory. Every beam whereby God is manifested is shot through him ; as every pardon, whereby the grace of God is discovered and the soul refreshed, is dispensed through him. The Jews ex-

pected the discovery of the face of God by the Messiah, and to that purpose interpreted, Dan. ii. 22, 'He reveals deep and secret things, and the light dwells with him.' That light is the Messiah dwelling with God, and some of them call him by the name of light there mentioned, נְדִירָא, though the words seem only to declare that God is the author of all knowledge, and sees by a clear light whatsoever is done among the sons of men. It is certain, that whatsoever tends to the glory of God, his sovereignty, wisdom, righteousness, grace, is fully revealed by Christ. He hath declared who is the creator, governor, judge of all; that he is the chief good, the last end, and revealed all the means whereby we may come to a conjunction with him, and fruition of him, and exchange our darkness and misery for light and blessedness; and this chiefly by his death, for by that the perfections of God, hid in the infinite depths of his own essence, were in their rays transmitted to us. He could not be known, either by creatures or bare Scripture, in such a manner as he is known in the cross of Christ, wherein his immense goodness, profound wisdom, severe justice, exact truth, infinite condescension, are manifested in such a manner, that it is as, or more, impossible to conceive how God can make a higher discovery of himself, as it was for men and angels to conceive before, how he should make so rich a discovery of himself as this is. The cross of Christ was the dissolution of the ignorance of men. The darkness which had lain upon the land of Egypt (a type of the ignorance of man by nature, as the Israelites' deliverance typified the redemption by Christ) was taken off in the morning on the passover day, a type of the death of Christ.

But take in these propositions, what is to be said about this.

1. Christ was only capacitated for this discovery of God.

(1.) In regard of his intimacy with the Father. Though Moses was a non-such for converse with God, and spake with him face to face, yet he had not that intimacy as Christ had, who lay 'in the Father's bosom,' John i. 18, in the depths of his counsels, the intimate knowledge of his nature, in the delights of his favour. The secret of the Father is called the bosom of the Father, wherein he not only was but is; he is in the bosom of the Father in heaven, while he is exposed to infirmities below. 'No man hath ascended into heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven,' John iii. 13, *i. e.* no man hath understood the secret mysteries of God but Christ. He only knows those counsels, eternal transactions, and condescensions of God, because he only was interested in them. He hath not things by revelation, as the prophets and apostles, nor from the law and Scripture, as other teachers. None of them had seen any but the shadows, and tasted some ravishments in the visions when they were revealed; none of them had been in heaven and seen those things in the fountain, in the counsel of God. Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, acquainted men with many secrets of God, but they had not seen in heaven the things which they declared to others. Nor was the full scope and design of those revelations understood by the prophets themselves: 1 Peter i. 11, 'They searched what the Spirit of Christ did signify.' They were more prophetic instruments than prophetic agents; the Spirit rather spoke through them than to them. They saw things in images, heard them in obscure representations, and so delivered them as obscurely as they understood them; and those that were most familiar with God, as Moses, had their revelations on earth, not in heaven. But Christ saw all things in the secret of his Father in their proper form, without dreams and visions; he had sucked in the truth from the fountain, and drew that which he taught from the depths of wisdom in the bosom of his Father, which could not be in the power of any man; and therefore, John iii. 31, 32, 'He

that comes from above is above all, and what he hath seen and heard that he testifieth.' Others testify what they have heard; Christ testifies what he hath seen as well as heard. He did not only hear and report, but he saw the things himself; and in regard of his divine nature is above all teachers, as well as above all creatures. Was any else ever sealed with the brightness of God's glory? Was any else the dew from the womb of the morning? Did any else come out of the depths of the fountain and Father of lights? None was ever called the angel of God's presence or face but Jesus Christ, Isa. lxiii. 9.

(2.) In regard of his being the medium of the first discovery of God in the creation. 'All things were made by the Word of God, and without him was not anything made that was made,' John i. 3, 4; and being 'the life of men,' he was only capable to be 'the light of men.' Christ was the voice of God, whereby he exerted his power to bring things from nothing into being. 'The Lord said, Let there be light,' Gen. i. 3; and oftentimes, 'God said,' vers. 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, &c, which was not an external sound or voice, but the essential Word of God, whereby he communicated his goodness to the world in creation. A mere voice or outward sound of words could not be an instrument of itself to frame the world to such a beauty. And that the mystery of the second person lay in that often repetition of *God said*, in Gen. i., is obvious from John i. 1, which seems to be a comment upon and explanation of it: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,' so that the story of the creation is deciphered to us by God's speaking, to signify unto us that eternal *λογος* whereby the Scripture assures us 'God created the world,' Heb. i. 2, who was 'with him when he laid the foundations of the earth, stretched out the heavens, and digged a place for the sea,' Prov. viii. 22, &c. He is the wisdom and power of God in creation as well as redemption. Now, as in the creation the Son communicated to all creatures some resemblance of God, and the end of the creation being to declare God to the rational creature, it was most proper for the Son of God to make those further declarations of him which were necessary, who at first made the manifestation of God in the frame of the world. As the beautiful image of reason in the mind, breaking out with the discovery of itself in speech and words, is fittest to express the inward sense, thoughts, conceptions, nature, and posture of the mind, so the essential Word of God clothes himself with flesh, comes out from God to manifest to us the nature and thoughts of God. He which is the word of God is fittest to manifest the nature of God. The word in the mind of a man is insensible to others, but published with the voice is made sensible, and makes the person know whose word it is.

2. It was fit a higher knowledge of God should be manifested by Christ than by other prophets. It had not been for the honour of this prophet, who was greater than Solomon, greater than Moses, to have no more to discover of God than what was clearly known before in the church of the Jews; he had then been no prophet of note, a prophet without a discovery, a title without an office. As he is a king in name who hath nothing to govern, so he is but the echo of a prophet that repeats only what was declared before. The intimacy of our Lord Jesus with the Father had not appeared, if he had not something to manifest which was hid from the messengers that went before. That he might have an excellency above other prophets, and appear in the world with more eminent prerogatives, there was to be a greater effusion of light.* He had not been a Sun of righteousness if he had shined no brighter than an ordinary star. Since his coming was to be glorious, wherein

* Camero, p. 374; Col. i. 2.

could the glory of it be, if the greatness of the knowledge of God were not one excellent prerogative belonging to his incarnation, and in such a measure that the light that dawned before in the world, either from creatures, law, or prophets, should be as nothing compared with this sun? And though whatsoever was known of God by men was known by the mediation and direction of Christ, to whom, after the fall, God had committed all judgment (whence the 'Spirit of Christ' is said to 'speak in the holy prophets,' 1 Peter i. 11, and from him Isaiah received his instructions when he shewed himself to be sitting upon his throne, Isaiah vi. 1, compared with John xii. 41), yet some things were reserved hid for the gracing the office of this great prophet, as the doctrine of the Trinity, and real distinction of the three persons in the Godhead, the union of the divine and human nature, which were as clearly revealed by Christ under the New Testament as they had been obscurely under the Old. *Ante adventum Christi sciebatur Deus, Pater ignorabatur.**

3. The discovery of God was the great end of Christ's appearance upon the earth, his office. He was to declare things 'hid from the foundation of the world,' Mat. xiii. 35; to unfold the mysteries and secret counsels of God, and remove the shades and veils between him and the understandings of men, and reveal things which God never revealed before. In him who was God's light we were to see light, Ps. xxxvi. 9. In the Messiah, as the Jews expound it, or by the grace of God in him, we were to know God with clearness. The world was a dark chaos till Christ the Sun appeared in it, as the earth was till light was formed. Christ was not only to make a propitiation for us, but a manifestation of God to us; this was the design of his Father in sending him, John xvii. 6. As the sun hath not light only for himself, but for the world, so had Christ the knowledge of God in his human nature, not for himself, but to spread abroad in the world. He came out from 'the bosom of the Father to declare him,' John i. 18; ἐξηγείσθαι, to bring to light the hidden things of God, and comment upon the abstruse excellencies of the Deity. This was the common opinion of the Jews, that *adventu Messiae res absconditas et profundas apertas fore omnibus*, as appears by the Samaritan woman, John iv. 25, 'When the Messiah is come, he will tell us all things.' 'Before him there was no God formed,' Isa. xliii. 10, no right notion of God formed in the minds of men, no conceptions of his power, wisdom, pardoning grace, and saving mercy. The knowledge of Christ is urged in Scripture, not as the ultimate term of our knowledge, but as the medium of our knowledge of God; for the term mediator, and the office of prophet, evidence this. A mediator is to discover the inclinations and resolutions of the party with whom we are at variance, in order to the piecing up an agreement; a prophet discovers something of the mind and will of God to us. We are to know Christ, as he is the only person appointed to direct us to the knowledge of God; therefore, though Moses and Elias were with him upon the mount of transfiguration, *i. e.* though the law and the prophets pointed to Christ and declared something of God, yet we are ordered by the voice of God to hear him only, as the great instructor of the world: Mat. xvii. 5, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I well pleased: hear ye him.' It is his incommunicable title as mediator, to be our only master: Mat. xxiii. 10, 'One is your master, which is Christ.' He is only the wisdom of God, as discovering the secrets of heaven to the believer without those clouds of Levitical rites.

4. The angels have the clearest knowledge of God by Christ, much more man. The voice of Christ extended to heaven as well as earth, and manifested the greatness of God to angels as well as men. As he was the medium

* Hieron. in Ps. ciii. 1.

of their creation, so he was the medium of the manifestation of God to them, that from the same hand from which they had their being they might have their happiness and perfection of their nature. The whole time they had seen the face of God in heaven, they knew little of him as he is known in Christ, nor could conceive him so admirable as the revelation of him by Christ represents him. If they had seen *in lumine gloriæ*, all that which may be known of God *in lumine gratiæ*, what need they bow down themselves (a posture intimating pains, curiosity, and earnestness of inquiry) towards the divine propitiatory, to dive, if they can, to the very bottom of it? 1 Peter i. 12. It was this way that God would give them a knowledge of the depths of his wisdom, and his other perfections: Eph. iii. 10, 'To the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.' It was one end of God in the manifestation of the riches of his grace to the Gentiles, to enrich the angelical nature with a greater light, that thereby they might be furnished with more ravishing matter of his praise. Not that the angels are present at sermons, to understand things they knew not before; but that by the effects of God in the world, gathering men into Christ, and framing a church out of lost mankind, they contemplate the manifold wisdom of God. God might have communicated this to them by immediate revelation, but he remits them to gather it from his effects, and to view it in the glass of Christ and his church. This was the purpose of God, to increase the knowledge and matter of the angels' praise, when he should pour out his treasures in Christ upon the world; not by the church's teaching them, but objectively, by a sight of those things acted in the church. If they then learn so much of the excellency of God by the calling of the Gentiles, how much more must they learn by the contemplation of the Son of God in his incarnation and passion? And to this purpose consider 1 Tim. iii. 16, 'And, without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels,' &c., seen of, or appeared to the angels.* It cannot be understood of a simple vision; so was Abraham, Moses, Elias, seen of the angels. Every believer is seen of them, since they are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation; all the world is seen of them. What grandeur is there in the mystery of godliness in this regard, that Christ was seen of angels, if it be meant of a simple vision? Nor is it meant of the sight that angels had of him at his resurrection and ascension; for so he was seen by the apostles and other disciples, and by the women that came to the sepulchre. And was this a mystery, for angels to see that which was obvious to the view of men? Not seen of angels, that they might be witnesses of his resurrection; to whom should they be so? To his disciples? Christ in his own person witnessed his resurrection to them. To the world? Angels were not made apostles by Christ for such a purpose. The apostles founded the witness they gave of the resurrection of Christ to the world, not upon the revelation of angels, but upon their own sight and knowledge of him. He was seen of angels, as he was justified by the Spirit; declared to be the Son of God, Redeemer of the world, as he was preached to the Gentiles; as mediator and reconciler, as he was received up into glory, approved of by God, settled as an advocate for mankind. Not seen of angels to receive from him any healing virtue, as the brazen serpent was seen of the Israelites to extract the venom of the fiery ones, because they had none of that poison in them; but seen of angels, as a mediator representing to them a greater knowledge of God in the mystery of redemption than the beauty and order of the world, their own glory in heaven, the variety of past providences, the

* Amyraut. Sermon sur cet texte.

former communications of God to the Jewish church, could possibly teach them. The angels could not behold the essence of God, though they stood before him in heaven. No finite creature in the most elevated condition can see that which is infinite. The glorious essence of God is too illustrious for any creature to behold without being overwhelmed by the brightness of it, and is so immense that it infinitely surpasseth the angelical understanding. Hence they are in the vision portrayed with wings to cover their faces as well as their feet, Isa. vi. 2, as not able to sustain the glorious lustre of his countenance, as we cover our eyes with our hands when we are invaded with too dazzling a light. They must therefore have some other medium of the knowledge of him than by a direct vision; this they have by Christ. They know something of him by the creation of the world, by Scriptures; they saw that, after the revolt of mankind, God expressed a care and tenderness towards the world; and thereby they know him to be a God of patience, as well as before they had known him to be a God of justice in the punishment of the apostate spirits. They saw that God employed them in many messages to the patriarchs and Israelites, and about the affairs of the world. They saw him bear with the idolatry of the Gentiles, and spare those arrows they had deserved to be shot against them. They might suspect there was some way of reconciliation intended. They knew the prophecies of a Redeemer, the promise of the seed of the woman, as well as Adam did by the knowledge of Scripture, yet the manner and methods of it were reserved as a mystery in the secret counsels of God. They were not ignorant in general of what God would do, but the predictions of it being obscure, their knowledge of it must be of the same nature. They knew the mystery of Christ's incarnation when it came to be accomplished, and knew then that the design of it was peace on earth, and the fountain of it good will to men. But all this knowledge was nothing to that which they had experimentally and clearly, when they saw the things themselves perfected. When they saw the Son of God remaining in his divine nature in heaven, and yet, by an admirable union to the human nature, manifested in the infirmities of our flesh; when they saw him in the divine nature sitting upon a throne of justice, yet exposed to the sufferings of the cross, injured by men, invaded by devils, deserted by his Father, heaven and earth in confusion at the groans and death of the Son of God; when they saw him justified in the Spirit, raised from death, ascending up to heaven with that body wherein he had suffered: they learned more of God and his nature, more of the depths of his wisdom, treasures of his grace, and power of his wrath, than they had done by all God's actions in the world, from the foundation of it, in all those four thousand years wherein they had remained in being.

5. The manner how we have by Christ the knowledge of God will also evidence it. Not to speak that the naked declaration of Christ is a manifestation of God, we have it.

(1.) By way of purchase. The declarations of the name of God are founded upon the expiation of sin, made by the merit of the death of Christ. All the knowledge of God we have by reason is not from nature, but is a part of Christ's purchase. He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and is thereupon the light that enlightens every man that comes into the world. Sin made the veil between God and us, and Christ's sacrifice removed it. God shone out upon man, till a cloud of iniquity interposed; the Sun of righteousness dissolved the cloud, and made the nature of God visible to us. The propitiation made upon the cross is the cause of the knowledge of God under the new covenant: Heb. viii. 11, 12, 'All shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their un-

righteousness, and their sins and their iniquity I will remember no more.' God smelt so sweet a savour in the blood of his Son that he was appeased, opened his treasures, sent out his Spirit to acquaint men with his nature, counsels, and thoughts; and though the Spirit descended before, in some sprinklings and dews, yet not in a full shower, till Christ had died, and carried his perfuming blood to heaven, presented it to God; whereupon the veil was drawn, the heavens opened, the Spirit poured out upon men, and that light given to the souls of his people which was necessary for their instruction. It was after his death and ascension that he gave gifts to men, whereby some became apostles, some evangelists, that men might come to a knowledge of Christ, and by him to a knowledge of God.

(2.) By illumination. Our reason being impaired by sin, and the acuteness of it dulled by the disease of Adam, the understanding must be renewed, and reason must be repaired, to know the mysteries of heaven. For as there must be an eye to discern things visible, so there must be a mind to discern things spiritual, for 'the natural man receives not the things of God,' 1 Cor. ii. 14. Though they be propounded (for the word *not receiving* implies an offer),* yet such is the constitution of corrupt nature in every man, that he comprehends not the things of the Spirit of God; and so great is the disproportion between the excellency of the things propounded and the disposition of the carnal mind, that he judgeth of those things differently from their true nature; for the mind is carnal and the things are spiritual, and therefore there must be a spiritual faculty to enable for the discerning of them. Christ therefore tells the Pharisees, John v. 37, 38, that they had 'neither heard his voice, nor seen his shape, and had not his word abiding in them;' *i. e.* they had no knowledge of God, because they believed not. Their poring upon the law and the Scriptures was to as little purpose, till the darkness of their minds was removed, as a blind man's bending his face to a book till his eyes be restored. This is the work of Christ: he presents God to the mind, and fits the mind to take a prospect of God. He offers the object and prepares the faculty, he flasheth the light and dischargeth the mind of the films which hinder the reception of it: 1 John v. 20, 'We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true.' He hath given us an understanding,† is not meant of the natural faculty, which is the gift of God in nature and creation, and which grace presupposeth, but of an enlightened and purified mind, which is operative upon the will and heart; and imprints so firmly the glory of God upon the mind, that the will is carried out to love and fear him; which compliance of the will with an illuminated understanding is the formal act of our regeneration. This is given only by Christ, for 'who teacheth like him?' Job xxxvi. 22; who doth not only present but imprint the object, and of darkness makes us 'light in the Lord.' Hence Christ is compared to a roe or a wild goat,‡ which is a creature not only of an acute sight itself, but hath that humour in the bowels that expels dulness from the eyes and sharpens the sight. So Christ doth not only see the Father, but makes us see him, when he hath opened our understandings.

III. The third thing is, the necessity of this medium for the knowledge of God. This hath been evident already. For,

1. The insufficiency of other mediums shews us the necessity of some other, and God hath revealed no other but this of Christ, which seems to be a standing and eternal one, whereby God will transmit his beams upon

* Amyraut. paraphrase in loc.

† Mestrezat in loc.

‡ Cant. ii. 9 Δορκάς; (Septuagint), Voss. de Idolat. lib. iii. cap. 58.

glorified souls ; for so it will be in that state of the church in this world, which is but one remove from that of heaven : Rev. xxi. 23, ' The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.'

2. The knowledge of the angels being by this medium evidenceth the necessity of it. For what is necessary to those unspotted understandings, is much more necessary for us, who have weaker intellectual eyes.

3. The immense glory of God, and our natural weakness as creatures, evidence the necessity of it. The glory of God would overwhelm the understanding of a creature, there is too great a disproportion between God and us, his infinite glory would dazzle and stupify us. The weakness of our sight hinders from a full prospect of the stars, much more from a sight of the body of the sun, which is more offensive than delightful to our eyes, both by its brightness and its heat, if we venture to lift them up without an instrument fitted for that purpose. If we cannot then gaze upon the sun with our bodily eyes without being oppressed by its lustre, how can we look upon God with the eyes of our minds, without being overwhelmed by that dazzling light wherewith he clothes himself as with a garment, since God is more transcendently excellent above the capacity of our understandings, than the sun can be too bright for the eyes of our bodies ? The sun, as glorious as it is, may be seen and viewed, not only by its effects, but in a glass or a vessel of water or a thin cloud ; but we can only see and know God in Christ his image, and the beam and ' brightness of his glory,' Heb. i. 3. The glory of God is refracted by Christ, and tempered to our weakness, whereby we may believingly behold his love without complaints of scantiness, and see his justice without fear of being consumed by it, and instead of being oppressed by his light, may be ' changed into the same image from glory to glory,' 2 Cor. iii. 18. Christ is the veil through which we may look upon God, as through a veil we may behold the sun. He that hath seen Christ hath seen the Father : John xii. 45, ' He that sees me seeth him that sent me ;' and he that knows Christ knoweth the Father, because of the likeness of one to the other, John xiv. 9. He that spiritually knows the Son knows the Father. Not he that seeth Christ corporeally, for then the unbelieving pharisees might be said to see the Father ; nor he that seeth Christ intellectually, for then mere Christian notionalists may be said to see the Father ; but he that sees Christ spiritually with a knowledge of faith, knows the Father, for the majesty and bounty of God shine in Christ as an exact image.*

IV. The fourth thing is, what knowledge of God is discovered to us by Christ. We do not only know in Christ what we know by creation, but more than can possibly be known of God by the works of his hands. All his works in creation are but obscure flashes of his nature in comparison of this. God hath opened himself abundantly in the sufferings and exaltation of Christ, and done enough to raise himself from those common thoughts and apprehensions men have of him. He hath spread abroad the ensigns of his majesty, to clear the minds of men, raise their admirations, and elevate their thoughts and esteem of him. The church, therefore, in the time of the gospel, is called ' the throne of God,' Jer. iii. 17, and ' a ' glorious high throne,' Jer. xvii. 12 (the legal state was called the ' throne of his glory,' Jer. xiv. 21), because therein, by Christ, he doth, as kings upon the throne, shew himself in his royalty and magnificence, in the largeness of his bounty, severities of his justice, lustres of his wisdom, and the honour of his law, in Christ the head of the church, and this manifestation of God was chiefly in

* Non ut ipse sit pater qui filius ; sed quod a patris similitudine in nullo prorsus discrepat filius.—August. *in loc.*

the death of Christ : John xiii. 31, ' Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.' Now shall there be a manifestation of my good will to men, and obedience to God, and a manifestation therein of God's love to mankind and justice against sin.

In Christ, there is,

First, A collection of God's perfections.

Secondly, The harmony of all.

1. All the attributes of God are glorified in Christ. This was the petition of Christ, John xii. 28, ' Father, glorify thy name. Then came a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again,' *i. e.* thy attributes and the perfections of thy nature, make them all illustrious in the work I have undertaken ; which petition God readily assents to, so much was his heart and delight set to make the brightness of his own nature appear in this way ; which glorification is not any addition to the essential glory of God, but the manifesting it and making it known in the riches of it to the sons of men. Christ added no glory to God's nature by his death and resurrection, but opened the curtains, and manifested that which had lain hid from eternity in the infinite depths of his own essence. In this regard he is called by the name of the ' glory of God' rising upon the world, Isa. lx. 1. For Christ is a certificate wherein the world may read how excellent, wise, bountiful, just, faithful, holy, God is. These are all visible in him in the noblest manner, so that we cannot deliberately view and consider Christ, but we are presently informed of the glory of the Deity. Since Christ was so loving, tender, holy, religious, we must conclude the Father is of the same nature ; he would not send one unlike himself, one that was not the character of his person, upon such an errand as the discovery of his own nature to men and angels. God had in several ages of the world pitched upon particular seasons, to manifest one or other particular property of his nature : his justice, in drowning the old world and firing Sodom ; his truth and power, in freeing the Israelites from the Egyptian chains ; his truth, in performing a promise which had lain so long dormant ; his power, in quelling his enemies by the meanest of his creatures ; his wisdom, in delivering them from the Babylonish captivity, by the ordering secondary means for the attainment of their end. In the creatures, one or other attribute seems to be more illustrious in one than another : in some appears more of goodness, in another more of wisdom, in another more of power, though his glory shines in all ; as not a star in heaven but sparkles, and discovers not only itself, but something of the heaven wherein it is placed, yet some with more lustre than others, according to the portion of light afforded them. But in Christ all the perfections of God are centred together, as if all the stars were made one body, and transmitted their light in one beam upon the world ; or as various streams gliding from several parts and circling large compasses of ground fall unanimously into the sea, and rest in the bosom of it. In him sparkle the justice of God in the punishment of sin ; mercy, in laying foundations of pardon ; bounty, in his love to his creatures ; faithfulness, in the accomplishment of his promises, and realising the figures of the law ; wisdom, in framing and managing the gospel design ; holiness, against the pollutions of the world in the condemnation of sin ; and power, in effecting what he pleased in his own counsel. Hence it is that God, so often speaking of his design of redemption, adds often, ' that I may be glorified,' Isa. xlix. 3, and lx. 21, &c, as though he had none, or but a retail glory by creation, but the riches and full sum of it was to be gathered in and laid out in the work of redemption by Christ. For of some of his attributes we could have no account by the creation, and of others not so apparently and de-

lightly as in the transactions of Christ. For as the sun excels all the stars in discoveries, dispersing his rays in all climates of the earth, so doth Christ, the Son of the Father's bosom, and the Sun of righteousness, exceed all creatures in the revelation of the excellencies of God. Christ is the stage wherein all the attributes of God act their parts: in creation, he was a God of goodness and power; in providence, a God of wisdom; in the law, a God of justice; in Christ, a God of all, and a God of grace, a Father of mercy.

2. As in Christ all the attributes of God are manifest to man, so they are manifest in an exact harmony. In Jesus Christ those attributes that seemed to look with an ill aspect on one another, are mixed together with unexpressible sweetness, and knit in an eternal amity. Patience rejoiceth at its indefatigable waiting, justice triumphantly flourisheth the bloody sword bathed in the heart of the Redeemer, and mercy as triumphantly kisseth it, justice glorying and mercy singing at the triumphs of justice, truth holding both threatenings and promises in conjunction in her bosom; all caressing one another, and applauding the designs and accomplishments of manifold wisdom and infinite power, which removed the seeming contrarieties, and tied a knot between time and eternity. Christ is 'the first-born of every creature,' Col. i. 15, or of all creation, *πάσης κτίσεως*. As the first-born is the strength of the parent, so is Christ the strength of God. The glories of God scattered in the creation are gathered into him, all things in heaven and earth; the glories of God in the confirmed felicity of angels, and restored happiness of man. As he gathered angels and men into one family, 'all things in heaven and earth,' Eph. i. 10, so he gathered all the attributes of God into one sum, to conspire together for the welfare of believers. His justice made our iniquities meet upon him, that they might not remain upon us; wrath passed by us and seized upon him; wisdom contrived for his own glory and our good. His truth made good his promises upon our persons, and his threatenings upon our surety; he took the curse off from us to fulfil it on Christ, Gal. iii. 13, that he might be righteous as well as gracious 'to forgive us our sins;' 1 John i. 9, the treasures of his goodness and grace are opened in him, that we might receive 'grace for grace,' John i. 16; more grace from God in redemption than that we forfeited by transgression, more habitual grace for our establishment than Adam had in paradise for his standing. He is 'made wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption,' the power, wisdom, justice, holiness of God to us; goodness, grace, love, righteousness, whatsoever distinction they have in themselves, meet all in him in their glory and sweetness, combine together, and sing one and the same note for the happiness of man. All the treasures of them are laid open in Christ, to be laid out in all the fruits flowing from them for the eternal welfare of believers. How delightful a knowledge of God is this which Christ transmits to his people! How much higher and more ravishing is this prospect of God than that in the creation! All variety with harmony is pleasant; the choicest music is made up of discords skilfully fitted to agree with one another, and compose a charming air. This is that Christ, in whom God hath made all his attributes, which seemed to be in debate against man, [and irreconcilable to one another, to be in league together for the good of every believing soul, and rendered all their ways 'ways of pleasantness, and all their paths peace.' Let our souls praise him, let us delight to view him; this is that prophet, let us rejoice in him,

But in particular the patience, wisdom, purity, justice, mercy, power, and truth of God, with the reasons and depths of them, were manifested in and by Christ, as well as the nature and excellency of God.

1. The patience of God. We see the patience of God, as the first attribute,

coming to our view after the transgression of man, and the interposition of Christ. When Christ stepped out of the council of God, forbearance with a fallen world stepped out to meet him. This is the reason why he did not dash the world in pieces upon the sin of the first man, and raise another that should keep his law. Nothing of this glorious perfection had then been visible. This is the reason why, after forbearance with the first man, and after multiplied provocations by his posterity, he did not destroy the whole race of mankind, and turn a defaced world into flames, and make it smoke by the fire of his justice, as well as he had reared and preserved it by the arm of his power. He had not then manifested the longsuffering, the unwearied duration of this attribute, nor answered the end of his patience, which was a discovery of himself in his Son. By this we come to know why we were not made a prey to the just wrath of God and the fury of devils; why the divine revenge was held back so many ages; why he 'winked at the times of ignorance' and corruption, Acts xvii. 30, 31: even because he had appointed a man to judge the world, whom he would first send to save the world; why he suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, yet left them not without witness in the dispensations of his providence, viz., that in time he might be known in his Son to be 'the living God which made heaven and earth,' Acts xiv. 15-17. He exercised his patience upon this account, and would not take the forfeiture, in expectation of the fulness of time wherein his Son should be manifested to make up the breach, and the glorious design of his patience manifested in him. For the great ground of it was the discovery of his name, his loving-kindness in Jesus Christ: Isa. xlvi. 9, 'For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee that I cut thee not off.' And he bore with an infinite patience the affront of Jews and Gentiles, till the time came that his Son should be 'set out to be a propitiation for the remission of sins that were past, through the forbearance of God,' Rom. iii. 25. He discovered his patience in not pouring down upon every great sin destroying judgments; not for want of justice in himself or lowness of disposition, but for the demonstration of his justice and loving-kindness together in the sacrifice of his Son, wherein he intended to represent himself in a glorious manner to the world. His kindness was the end of his forbearance. He supported himself under the indignities of men, and deferred the time of the oblation of this sacrifice, that this attribute might be known, and that he might have a more glorious foundation for the display of his pardoning mercy, which he intended should follow after, and might bring forth his grace in its glory to take away the guilt of men's sins, upon the return of men to him, after the bearing with so many oppositions: 2 Peter iii. 9, He is 'longsuffering to us, not willing that we should perish.' It is highly discovered also, since the coming of Christ, that notwithstanding those repeated indignities offered to his Son by contempt and unbelief, and to himself in his Son, yet he keeps the world standing till he hath gathered in the objects of his eternal grace, and completed his family in his Son, whereby he hath rendered his long-suffering more clear and admirable than if he had sustained the rejection of millions of more prophets than ever yet were put to death or persecuted by the unbelieving world.

2. His love, and goodness, and pardoning mercy. John xiv. 6, 7, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes to the Father but by me. If you had known me, you should have known my Father also; and from henceforth you know him and have seen him.' As I am the way of access to the Father, so I am the *medium* of the manifestation of the Father: if you know me, my love and my heart toward you, you cannot but know my Father's heart and love too. Though man fell from his finite goodness and

duty to God, yet it is manifest in Christ that the infinite Creator could not fall from his infinite tenderness. If the manifestation of his goodness was his end in bringing forth the creatures, it was much more his end in bringing forth his Son.

(1.) This the creation did not discover. Man might know that God was bountiful in filling his heart with food and gladness by the creatures, but did not understand anything of pardoning mercy in God, if sin should enter upon the world. Had the creation had any inscription of forgiving grace upon it, why do we not find some supplications for it from the mouth of Adam after the fall? Do we not find his heart as naked of any thoughts of this nature, as he was of his original righteousness? He was seized with an horror of conscience after his sin, but not a groan for pardon; for how could it enter into the heart of Adam but by revelation? The law given him at his creation spake not a syllable of it; the voice of that was nothing but death, death: Gen. ii. 17, 'Thou shalt surely die.' Nothing else could be expected by him upon his eating the forbidden fruit, nor could he have the least sentiment of remission till the pronouncing the promise of Christ in the seed of the woman. The manifestation of Christ in the beginning of the book was the first notice of any such perfection in the nature of God. That same moment of time when Christ was given, wrapt up in a promise, did pardoning grace sparkle out, and not any time before.

In the law which God gave Adam for the rule of obedience, there was nothing but strict justice; and upon God's first inquiry after Adam, there was no proclamation of pardon by God, nor expectation of it by Adam, but an examination of matter of fact: 'Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?' Gen. iii. 11, 12; nor any offer of Adam falling upon his knees and imploring mercy; but standing upon his justification, wiping off the dirt from himself to discharge it wholly upon his wife. The treasures of this were so closely locked up in God, that Adam, just stepped out of a happy condition (who, though he had lost his righteousness, had not lost his knowledge and memory, as appears by his answer to God, of what had been done before his fall, and in the time of his fall yet), could not in the least imagine any mercy; and therefore the wittiest and most refined natural knowledge in the heathen, less than Adam had, could not have any sentiments of it barely from nature, without some traditional revelation at the least. This attribute could not possibly have exerted itself without Christ. Power, wisdom, goodness, did shine in the creation, holiness in the law of nature, justice in the punishment of fallen angels, and expulsion of man out of paradise; but this of forgiving mercy, if you respect the first economy of things, could not be evidenced without Christ; for, not to speak of the naturalness of God's justice, whereby he could not, in regard of his nature, pardon sin without a satisfaction, which is very probable; but only that the word of threatening being past for the death of a sinner, a satisfaction was necessary for the truth of God, honour of the law, and recovery of the creature, which could not have been performed by a mere creature, therefore it was necessary some person above a creature should undertake it, or else no such thing as pardoning grace, which is one of the greatest glories of the Deity, could ever have been known either by angels or men, but had remained undiscovered in unfathomable depths, unknown even to the angels in heaven, who know nothing of God but by the effects, because his essence is inaccessible to the understanding of any creature. As in Christ alone, and in his blood, we have the purchase of 'redemption, even the forgiveness of sin,' Col. i. 14, so in and by him alone we had the first discovery of it in the promise, and a full declaration of it afterward. When he was set forth

as a propitiation, it was not only to purchase our happiness, but to let into our knowledge the righteous and gracious nature of God thereby : Rom. iii. 25, 'To declare his righteousness for the remission of sins ; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and a justifier ;' which declaration was not made by nature and the creation.

(2.) This, then, was only discovered in and by Christ, both in the glory of it to God, and the sweetness of it to us. It was in Christ discovered to be God's nature, and our life. God is love, and the manifestation of it to us was in God's 'sending his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him,' 1 John iv. 8, 9, that the dead world might live through him. Hereby he did not only declare himself placable, not only desirous to manifest a scanty goodness to the creature, but to shew that his nature was enriched with the choicest love and grace, and his desire that it should flow out in the highest manner through a mediator to the polluted and rebellious world, and be screwed up to the highest peg. In him God opened his bowels, which lay secretly yearning, and 'brought life and immortality' for the creature 'to light through the gospel,' 1 Tim. i. 10. Both mercy and love were manifested. Love is a perfection of a higher strain than mercy ; mercy may be prevalent where love is absent. Mercy hath for its object a thing miserable ; love hath for its object a thing amiable ; pardoning grace hath for its object a thing criminal. The mercy of God is manifested in the death of Christ for us when we wallowed in misery ; the pardoning grace of God is declared upon us as we are loaded with guilt ; love is manifested in being well-pleased with us in the best beloved, after we are made comely and amiable by him. Christ is the *medium* of the manifestation of this. This was his main design, that his grace might be discovered with an emphatical phrase : Eph. i. 6, 'To the praise of the glory of his grace,' *i. e.* by an Hebraism, *us* glorious grace, and be known in its glory to men and angels in the height, breadth, length, and depth of it, that he might communicate his Spirit, his heaven, himself to them ; to be in them, and they in him ; to love them with such a love as he loves his Son, *i. e.* with such a love as he loves himself ; and all his other attributes were employed in the design of glorifying this. Wisdom contrives, truth designs the sacrifice, justice strikes, to render mercy and love triumphant. God constituted this his principal glory, and, in a manner, esteemed not all his other virtues, but as they were ordered to manifest this. Though he had manifested several perfections in the creation, yet this was utterly unknown to the world till he exposed his Son to death for them. The law manifested him to be just, the gospel manifested him to be just, and a justifier. In the law, he manifests the sovereignty of his justice in punishment ; in the gospel, he inflicts severe punishments upon his Son, the surety, and mercifully absolves the believing offender ; he is in Christ unveiled, and shines in the condescensions of his love.

Discovered,

First, In the freeness of it. His goodness shined in the creation, but with a weaker light. Goodness was communicated to *nothing* in bringing it into being ; which *nothing*, as it had not merited that goodness, so it had not deserved the contrary. It had as little of demerit as it had of merit. He made his goodness break out then upon nothing, but, in Christ, upon things worse than nothing. He manifested his goodness in giving life to man, but without the expense of the blood of his Son, and the loss of his life, by whom he conferred the benefit of life upon sinners. What goodness he manifested to man after his creation, in giving him the other creatures for his service, had not so beautiful a complexion as his goodness in Christ. Then he

gave creatures to him of the same mould with man himself, but in Christ he gives man's creator to man; his own Wisdom, whereby he created all things. When he gave creatures to man at first, he gave them to an holy, just, righteous man, pure as he came out of the mint of God's power and holiness; but he gives his Son to depraved man, who had affronted him, and cast those rich endowments of his nature behind his back. He finds out a way to glorify his mercy, when he might only have glorified his justice; takes rebels into his arms, who had merited the thunders of his anger; and, by an incomparable and unimagined kindness, gives his Son to save his enemies, and adopts them for his children; and that by a free act of his own, not being persuaded by any other: John iii. 16, 'He gave his only begotten Son.' Also, in taking occasion from so great an evil as sin, to manifest such an excess of love, as if the steams of dung and vapours from mire and dirt should be an occasion of the sun's emitting his beams with greater clearness and freedom. The heathens regarded God as severe; though they saw testimonies of his patience, they imagined the kindness he shewed to them wrung from him by their sacrifices and cries, and purchased by their services; but they saw not the springs of kindness freely bubbling up in his own breast. But in Christ we behold his compassions moving of themselves, and working together till the whole design of love was brought to perfection.

Secondly, In the tenderness of it. The gospel presents God in Christ under more tender titles to man than either creation or law. In the one, it was 'the Lord God;' in the other, 'the mighty Lord,' 'the Lord of hosts,' 'the terrible God;' names and marks of grandeur, sovereignty, and justice. In the gospel, he assumes the title of Father, a name of kindness and compassion; and is called in the New Testament more by that title of *Father* than that of a *Lord*, as if his sovereignty had been swallowed up in tenderness. This title of Father is ascribed to him in the Old Testament more rarely; once in regard of the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, as typical of the redemption by Christ: Deut. xxxii. 6, 'Is not he thy Father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee and established thee?' and promised to be the familiar name whereby they should call upon God in the times of the gospel: Jer. iii. 19, 'Thou shalt call me, my Father, and shalt not turn away from me;' as, indeed, the name *Abba*, Father, is peculiar to the gospel, and the name wherewith we have access to the throne of grace; in giving, also, a new law founded upon better promises, repealing the threatenings in regard of any force upon a believer, and enjoining milder conditions than in the first covenant.

Thirdly, In the fulness of it, declared in the person of his Son. Rather than he would lose the whole race of mankind, he would spare nothing, no, not his best beloved, with whom though he were ever well pleased, yet he must suffer, that in him he might be well pleased with us. He advanced his mercy over all the difficulties which lay in his way, and to magnify it, would not spare his Son, that he might spare the sinner, but condemn him to death for the redemption of a servant. The immense goodness which appears in heaven and earth, sun and moon, and motions of them, and in every other creature, is nothing to the making him a creature by whom he made the worlds. To make him, who was the brightness of his glory, become as vile as earth; him who was God to be a man; the Lord of life to be the subject of death, whereby the souls of men sunk into the depths of misery are made capable of deliverance and enjoyment of an happy immortality, the possession of an heavenly paradise, a communion in glory with himself, is a love infinitely above that goodness which appeared in the

creation ; and so magnificent, that if angels and men had millions of years to busy their thoughts, they knew not how to imagine higher ; for it cannot enter into the heart of men or angels to conceive the grandeurs of affection and mercy which God hath not only prepared, but represented to our view in Christ. He hath hereby evidenced that he was so far from envying the happiness of man, as the devil had made Adam at first believe, that he would rather advance it at the expense and cost of the blood of his Son, and would give life more abundantly in Christ, John x. 10, in a greater plenitude and longer duration, than Adam had by creation and his own strength, or the patriarchs under the law. Here love spends itself in the conquest of death and hell, which had dissolved the happiness of man ; gives life a freedom from unrighteousness, the death of our innocent nature ; and from the severities and torments of justice, which is the death of our persons. And whereas in creation he gave creatures to man, which are the works of his hands, he gives now his Son to man, who is partaker of his essence, and sends him to be put in the place of the sacrifices, whose throats were cut under the law, and were unable to make an atonement for sin ; and not only to suffer for us, but to suffer as a curse and execrable thing in our stead, Gal. iii. 13. If God had sent an angel, one of the excellent creatures of heaven, to be clothed with our nature, and die in our stead, it had been admirable goodness not to spare for us one of those sublime and excellent creatures.* God had manifested a goodness, but had not been glorified by it in the fruits of it, which we could never have enjoyed, because no creature could pay a sufficient ransom for the sin of man. The ransom was to be infinite, but angels were limited and finite creatures ; and if they had undertaken, they must have suffered too infinitely, and never have emerged out of their misery. Yet, supposing an angel could have redeemed us, this love, which is the glory of his nature, had not appeared in its riches by such a grant, because the angels were formed of nothing, and were the works of his hands, but were not of the essence of God. But herein his love appears in the choicest dress, in that he sent one begotten of his substance, one with him, true God with the Father, to whom the Father had communicated his nature. We call not the works of an artificer his children, because they have not his nature, though they are the products of his art and industry. Herein he shows the lustre of his mercy, and that he is love indeed in his nature, as well as in his fruits, beyond the imagination of men and angels, and all that nature could instruct them in. His shooting his arrows into his Son rather than lose the rebel, and engraving upon him the marks of his anger, is the highest point his compassion to us could mount to, and the highest proof of the treasures of love and pity in his heart for us.

(3.) This knowledge of God's love is most comfortable to the creature. God is sweetened in Christ to our understanding. He lays by his fury to unveil his mercy, and sticks the sting of his justice in Christ, to receive us into the bosom of his love. It is a strong consolation, that if God kept to his own design, formed in his breast from eternity, and discovered to the world in Christ, to advance the riches of his grace, no penitent and believing sinner can despair, but rather have an argument that God will pardon him, because it is suitable to the design he had from eternity, and the manifestation of it in time. For why should he prepare all things for man's recovery before man's fall, foreseen by him, and decreed to be permitted ? Why should he provide a medicine before the disease, a solder before the crack, and fix upon a certain way to pardon the rebels, before they had beings wherewith to rebel, if he had no intention to apply it when they should have

* Mestrezat sur 1 John iv. 8, 9.

the grace to believe it? And is not this pardoning grace rather honoured by the pardon of great sins and many sins, than by the pardon of few sins and small sins? Therefore, as he suffered sin to enter into the world, that he might bring upon the stage his pardoning mercy, to the view and comfort of the creature, which else had lain in the abyss of the divine essence without any opportunity of discovery, so he suffers men to go on in sin a long time, that his grace may enter upon their souls with the greater magnificence and glory: 'The law entered, that sin might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound,' Rom. v. 20. Not, or not only, that law the Jews had, but the first law to man in innocence; not as the *finis intentionis*, but the event in the fall of man and prescience of God. Men naturally think God will not pardon their crimes, cannot have a kindness for such notorious rebels, because their scanty natures are not capable of such a quality towards grievous offenders against themselves. But this declaration of love in Christ takes away all scruples from men, brings forth his love triumphing over all the objections of penitent souls, that heaven itself cannot find a stronger medium to assure them of an immense plenitude of love in the breast of God. The goodness of God is therefore proposed as an object of trust (as it may be understood) in the day of the gospel, Hos. iii. 5, which is a larger manifestation of his goodness than in the law, which was an object of fear. They shall fear or trust in the Lord, or run with haste unto the Lord and to his goodness, viz. Christ, in whom they taste the bounty and goodness of God, and this in the latter days, when the shadows of the law shall fly away and have their period. And, indeed, when a poor deluded sinner sees those treasures of mercy in Christ, that ravishing love doth as much surprise as delight him, so that, with an amazing comfort, he can cast himself into the arms of that goodness which are opened so wide in the Son of his love. So that here only was love in its willingness, grace in its freeness, mercy in its sweetness, goodness in its fulness of benefits, conspiring together to set themselves forth in their best attire.

(3.) The wisdom of God is admirably manifested herein. The sending of Christ being so stupendous, the wisdom of God must be admirable in the ends designed by it, which shoots forth with clearer beams in his Son than in the creation, in which regard Christ is called the wisdom of God: 1 Cor. i. 24, 'Christ crucified, the wisdom of God,' *i. e.* the highest discovery of his wisdom is in the crucifixion of Christ, in the death of the Son of God upon the cross. Wisdom shined in the creation, it glitters every day in providence; but the depths and riches of it are in Christ. In those there are some doles, some lesser sums, but the treasures of it are hid in him, as in the great exchequer. Here are the deep counsels of God, which the apostle cannot speak of without a ravishing admiration: Rom. xi. 33, 'Oh the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!' 'A manifold wisdom,' Eph. iii. 10, in regard of the variety of effects in the glorifying his name, and dignifying his creature, in repairing the breach, and establishing the repair. Wherefore the apostle, speaking of this great mystery, breaks out into a doxology of the wisdom of God: Rom. xvi. 25-27, 'To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.' When the creation was despoiled by sin, not a jot of goodness left in it to give God any content, it was a greater wisdom to repair it without breaking it to pieces than to have created a new one. The wisdom in a new creation had been but of the same level, but that in restoring was of a higher elevation and a clearer gloss. To bring his glory out of the ashes wherein it seemed to be buried; to bring man out of darkness wherein he was, as to his own strength,

irrecoverably involved ; to put heaven and earth in tune again, which sin had made at discord with one another, was a high piece of skill. It is an admirable wisdom among men to unite two princes at variance, without invading either of their rights, but entirely preserving them ; to link them in a stronger peace than that they were in before they fell out ; to enlarge their empire, not only to a mutual satisfaction, but the increase of both their grandeur and glories. The case is the same : God repairs the breach between himself and man, and preserves his right ; he loseth nothing of his own honour, but enlargeth it ; man is restored to favour with a temporary diminution of his bodily happiness, but with an eternal increase of the felicities both of his soul and body ; all seeming contradictions are removed, and means fully proportioned to the ends intended are appointed. In this regard the apostle calls it 'all wisdom and prudence,' Eph. i. 8 ; wisdom drawing the platform, and prudence disposing the means consonant to the end. The work is done to the content of both, the glory of both, the rest of God, and the happiness of the creature ; and the skill was more wonderful in repairing the devastation in such an infallible way, past the reach of the tempter that defaced the first creation. Certainly that which shall be most admired at last will be the harmony and consent of things, by the skill of infinite wisdom, in conspiring together for the bringing about those ends God aimed at.

Wisdom takes large strides at every step.

[1.] In uniting the greatest extremes. In the creation God brought nothing to become something. In this he joins together beings at a greater distance.

First, The divine and human natures are united in one person. The highest intellectual nature, with the lowest rational nature, infinite and finite, glory and misery, time and eternity.* Christ calls himself the Son of man, to shew that he was really man in qualities,—John iii. 13, 'And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven,'—yet saith he *is in heaven*, to manifest that he is God ; man born of the virgin, yet the Son of God eternally begotten, the Word made flesh. God in heaven manifested in flesh upon the earth, each preserving their entire properties ; the Son of man by this union is become the Son of God, yet retains his pure and naked form as man ; the Word by this union is made flesh, yet without losing his infinity, eternity, and original being ; as a man hath two parts, an immortal and invisible soul, and a mortal visible body. As a man, he passeth through infirmities ; as God, he is above them.† The two natures are distinct, yet united in one subsistence, and make but one person, as the soul and body make one man. Yet not in such a manner as that the divine nature is the form of the human, for then Christ were not real man ; he was 'in the form of God,' yet 'in the form of a servant,' Philip. ii. 6, 7. Though there was no change in the divinity, yet the lustre of it was veiled by the infirmities of the flesh ; as when a thick cloud interposeth between the body of the sun and our eyes, it obscures the beams from our eyes, but defaceth not the body of the sun, or ravisheth its inherent beauty. And this union was made at the first conception ; ‡ if it had not been so, the virgin had not conceived God, but a pure man, contrary to Gal. iv. 4, 'God sent his Son, made of a woman.' If the humanity was not at that instant united to the *λόγος*, it did then subsist in its own created person, and the conception was then terminated to a created person, and in no sort to God ; and then it cannot be said that God was conceived

* Daille, sermon sur Jean iii. 13, p. 211.

† Daille, sermon sur Phil. ii. 7, 8, p. 411, &c.

‡ Suarez in tertiam Aquin. vol. xiii. diss. 16, sect. 1.

of the virgin. If the divinity did assume the humanity of that person after the time when Christ died, and the humanity had not before been united to the divine nature, his blood then shed could not have been said to be the blood of God, though the divinity should have assumed that humanity after the resurrection. An unexpressible wisdom in the uniting, in an unconceivable manner, two such vast distances, the divine and human nature in one person, that there might be a sufficiency to perform the task undertaken, and capacity to endure the suffering required to make up the breach; to unite one greater than a man to the human nature, that he might satisfy for man, and have that in himself which might exceed all the debt man owed to God! He provided a divine person to satisfy a God offended, a mediator, one with God that was wronged, and one with man that had sinned; partaking of the nature of both, that he might pay a price sufficient for the one, and acceptable to the other. In the creation, one creature was united to another, and all made up a world. In this, finite is united to infinite, to make up a complete and able mediator.

Secondly, The justice and mercy of God are united in a joint applause. He becomes merciful without being unjust, and just without impairing the honour of his compassion. Justice hath the highest right, and mercy its utmost intention; the cries of his justice, and the yearnings of his bowels, are united, without depriving either of their rights. No complaints can be found in the mouth of the one, nor any discontent in the looks of the other, but mutual smiles and mutual applauses. *Just* and *justifier* are joined in one justice and justification, Rom. iii. 26. The world is preserved, which in justice ought to be destroyed, without any reproach to the righteousness of God, as the governor of it; an eternal marriage is made between mercy and justice; both shake hands, and not only acquiesce but rejoice, for the sin is punished by justice in the surety, and pardoned by mercy in the sinner; both pleased and both gratified in seeing the honour of the law preserved, and the guilt of the sinner removed.

Thirdly, In uniting God and man in eternal fellowship. By this act he brings stubble to dwell with flames, and weakness to behold and enjoy glory without being overwhelmed by the weight and splendour of it, to draw near to the supreme majesty through the veil of the flesh of Christ. He causeth pardon and punishment to meet, that God appeased, and man acquitted, may come together. The punishment is inflicted upon the surety, that the offender might share in the glorious fruits of his mediation. God and man are brought to amity, angels and men are made one family, and more grace given to fit us for God than Adam lost. This was the point his wisdom aimed at, to make 'the riches of grace abound towards us,' Ephes. i. 7, 8. And to add to the wonder of his wisdom, God saves the sinner in the same way whereby he condemned the sin, and advanceth the offender to communion with him, the same way whereby he shewed his detestation of the crime. Sin is made the mark of the divine displeasure in the person of Christ, swallowed up and devoured by the flames of justice, that, the wall of separation being removed, he might meet his creature with arms widened by the dearest love.

[2.] In effecting this restoration without the perpetual prejudice of the mediator, and with his great honour and advantage. Had our sins been transferred upon an angel, he must have lain for ever plunged in that misery, for since his nature was not infinite to render his satisfaction infinite, an infinite duration of his sufferings was necessary to make that satisfaction valid, which his nature being finite was too weak to do. But the Son of God suffers a short time, to have an eternal glory for himself in his human nature as well as for his brethren. A satisfaction for sin is procured without a total

destruction of the person satisfying ; for such an one was designed by the infinite wisdom of God, whom it was 'impossible for the bands of death to hold,' Acts ii. 24. His death, the punishment of sin, is but of a short duration in regard of the pains, yet eternal in regard of efficacy for those ends for which it was intended ; God's glory is restored, man's happiness secured, without a perpetual impairing the mediator, but with an eternal exaltation of him.

[3.] In frustrating the subtlety of Satan. The devil thought he had brought a total destruction upon mankind, when he persuaded our first parents to eat of the forbidden fruit. But God orders it to bring about a greater glory to himself, and a firmer stability to his people, in introducing an everlasting covenant founded in a mediator, which could not be broken, and establishing their happiness upon surer terms than it was settled on in paradise, and afterwards outwits the devil in ordering him to be instrumental to that which he designed to hinder ; for while he is filling the heart of Judas to betray Christ, and egging the heart of the Jews to crucify him, God, by his wisdom, over-rules him to a subserviency to his own glorious end, for by that very way he thought to stifle the good of mankind, he occasionally promotes their perpetual redemption. God turned the subtlety of the devil to his own praise, bruised the devil's head by letting him bruise the mediator's heel, and made his malice conduce to the restoration of mankind from that ruin he had before by a prosperous subtlety effected. God, by a mysterious wisdom, more signal than all that in the creation, gained the victory over the devil, who had defaced his work, and gave man also a victory over the tempter, who had depraved his soul.

[4.] In the propagating this means of the discovery of himself. The wisdom as well as the power of God is discovered in using the most unlikely means to bring about his great ends, as the skill of a man is more evident in the moving great bodies by small engines and wires, than if he engaged in it a strength proportionable to the vastness of the body he would move. God hath spread abroad this knowledge by such means as the world counts foolishness, and by such persons as are no better than fools in their esteem, 1 Cor. i. 26, 27. He lodged his treasures of wisdom first in vessels of earth, bended the world to himself by the sermons of fishermen, enlightened the world by men unskilful in the affairs of it ; chooseth not to this purpose the cedars of Lebanon, but the shrubs of the valley ; not the learned pharisees of Jerusalem, but the poor men of Galilee, whose education was not capable to ennoble their minds, and fit them for such great actions as they were employed in. But 'out of the mouths of such babes and sucklings he ordains praise' to his own wisdom, and makes the world know that 'the foolishness of God is wiser than men,' 1 Cor. i. 25. Now, what is the frame of heaven and earth to this ? Just as his wisdom is in making a clod of earth to that which appears in the fabric of a man, or his yet more glorious wisdom in the frame of an angel. In the creation it is like a sunbeam through the chink of a wall in comparison of this, which, like the sun, faceth us in a brighter glory. There is counsel as well as will in the minute passages of providence, but a more glorious workmanship of wisdom in the discovery of Christ.

(4.) The justice of God is more evidenced than by all other judgments in this world, or that which is to come. God would be acknowledged in his justice after the fall, which was not known, and could not be known, in an innocent state any other way than in the threatening ; God would therefore have bloody sacrifices which might signify man's demerit, and therefore, probably, God was displeas'd with Cain for offering only the fruits of the earth,

whereby he only acknowledged God's dominion and bounty, but not God's justice and his own offence, which required a bloody sacrifice; he did not acknowledge the rights of justice and the necessity of a mediator to bear his sin. Whence Abel, who offered a more significant sacrifice, is said, Heb. xi. 4, to 'offer a more excellent sacrifice,' *πλείονα θυσίαν*. And his justice was never so evident as in Christ crucified; he chose his Son to lay upon him the guilt of the world, subjected him in the state of a criminal, depressed him to the condition of a servant, sunk him into the misery of rebels, caused him to swallow the disgraces of men, and drink down the vials of his anger, rather than the sin of the world should boast of impunity, and men presume to think him disarmed of his justice. What if the whole world was drowned by a wrathful deluge, Sodom and Gomorrah consumed to ashes by a shower of fire? What if every son of Adam were to lie roaring in endless torments? What if not an angel in heaven had escaped the sin and punishment of devils? What if this world were multiplied into millions, what if every man upon earth, and every angel in heaven, were multiplied into thousands of millions of men and angels? What if every spire of grass, grain of corn, atom of sand, were made a rational creature, and for sin thrown for ever into devouring flames? Is not here inexpressible justice? But what is this justice upon creatures which were made, to that justice upon his Son, by whom he made the creatures? What is this to the Son of God trailing a weak body for thirty-three years in the world, suffering the indignities of men and devils, bearing the weight of an infinite wrath? What are all other judgments to his bloody sweat in the garden, or the groans of this divine person upon the cross, of more worth than innumerable worlds of creatures? Who ever knew before the power of God's wrath? Ps. xc. 11. For as there is no proportion of creatures to God, so there is no proportion of the death of the Son of God for a time, to the death of all men and angels together. Consider the circumstances to render the justice of God more visible.

[1.] He was innocent in his own person. He was beloved by his Father, had never displeased him; the sins he suffered for were none of his own by commission, he made them his own by a voluntary submission, and God made them his own by a penal infliction. God would have sin punished in the person of our surety, though he was his only begotten and perfectly innocent Son.

[2.] He was willing to pay the debt. He offered himself up with a design to glorify his Father, to restore the creation to its former loveliness, to renew the delight that God had in his works when he pronounced them good, a consideration which one would think might sweeten the severest justice; yet nothing abated him, he must groan and bleed to death.

[3.] Yet he endured sorrows unexpressible. The powers of darkness had their hour against him, all the curses of the law were thundered out against him, while he was clothed in the garb of a sinner, as if when he had been leading to the cross, God had particularly spoken that word to him, 'Cursed is he that hangs upon a tree,' Gal. iii. 13. He was condemned and tormented by his servants, and those whose salvation he sought and designed; he was subject to that which no man, no, not the wickedest man, had ever endured in this life: the heavens were darkened upon him, earth forsaking him, none seemed to have pity upon him; 'terrors took hold upon him, and pursued his soul as the wind; his soul was poured out in him, his bones were pierced, and his sinews took no rest,' Job xxx. 15-17. He had an angel to comfort him, but with no commission to remove the cup from him that his Father held out for him to drink. What a demonstration of the justice of God is here: that he in whom all nations of the earth were to be blessed, whom the

angels in heaven bless, the saints on earth bless, yea, and is the blessed of his Father, yet is made a curse by him!

[4.] Deserted by his Father. His prayers were not answered for deliverance, not the least ear lent to his cries in his weightiest distresses. He was deserted as to the comforts of a Father, to be given up to the strokes of his wrath, as if he had discarded all bowels of compassion towards him. God dealt not with him as a Father, but as a God of justice; whence Christ upon the cross calls not upon God by the name of Father, which was his wonted custom, and as he had used that title in the garden, but by the name of God: 'My God, my God.' God became as it were cruel to him, and 'with strong hands opposed himself against him,' Job xxx. 21. Nay, God regarded him not, as if he were for a time ashamed to acknowledge him for his Son. And when they taunted him upon the cross, 'He trusted in God, let him deliver him, seeing he trusted in him,' though they reflected upon the name and glory of God, he would not at present take notice of the sufferings of his own name in the reproaches of the Jews, nor remit upon that score anything of his indignation against the sins of men, when it was the fittest time to vindicate his Son's innocence, because for this he was condemned, his making himself the Son of God. But he was so intent upon revenging sin imputed to his Son, that he regarded not the present actual indignity offered to himself, so that our Saviour himself seems to be astonished at his Father's silence in such a case, since his words, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' are uttered a little after that reproach of the Jews in the story, Mat. xxvi. 43, 46. This was the highest act of justice that the arm of God could put forth, to make the soul of his dearly beloved an offering for sin, whereby he manifested that without blood there could be no atonement, Heb. x. 7. And since no other blood had a sufficiency in it to quench the flames of his justice, God would single out the best blood in the whole creation wherewith to satisfy it; a blood though created, yet the blood of the Creator. Never could earth or hell read such a lecture of divine justice as in this case. For if God should damn thousands of worlds, his justice would be glorified, but in a company of little creatures; it would be but a devouring a few drops of a bucket.* But in Christ it is glorified in the man that is his fellow, Zech. xiii. 7. It is a stronger testimony of a prince's justice to condemn his son, his only son, for a crime, than to condemn a shiftless and friendless creature that hath not wherewithal to live. This doth manifest God's nature to be as just as it is gracious, that he will be as severely intent upon the punishing obstinate offenders, as he will be graciously intent upon the pardoning penitent sinners. It is equally incredible to the presumptuous sinner to believe God severely just, as to an humble soul to believe God magnificently gracious. It is not without cause therefore that the apostle doth urge his discourse of the justice of God on Christ, and thereupon the justification of believers, with a repetition: Rom. iii. 25, 'To declare, to declare, I say, his righteousness.' For in Christ we see God doth declare as well the rigours of his justice as the grandeurs of his love; for that sin should not be pardoned without punishment in his Son, is the height of justice; that he should expose his Son as a sacrifice for rebels, it is riches of grace. It is clear that justice in God is his essence, not, as in us, a quality; and that he is to sinners a consuming fire. The knowledge of God, as thus represented in Christ, should stop the course of a daring sinner. God had not contrived the death of his Son but for the declaring his justice as well as magnifying his grace. The knowledge of God in his justice, on Christ is comfortable to a believer; and the more, since

* Gurnal, part ii. p. 658, somewhat changed.

that perfection of God which is most terrible is rendered a foundation of joy, for God is gracious in being righteous: Ps. cxvi. 5, 'Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.' If he had not been righteous in his Son, we cannot conceive how with honour he could have been merciful to us. The severity of his justice on Christ glorifies the greatness of his grace to the believer. By how much the punishment on Christ was the sharper, by so much his mercy to the believer is the fuller. This vindictive justice is joined with his pardoning mercy, Exod. xxxiv.; because his not clearing the guilty illustrates his pardoning the guilty upon the account of the Surety. It is a foundation of a plea for every believer. The justice of God hath drunk up the blood of Christ as a full satisfaction; it is therefore glorified in the highest manner, whereas in the damnation of men the debt had been always paying and never paid; and so justice had been always satisfying and never satisfied, and so had been always glorifying and never fully glorified. But here the debt is paid, and justice hath no more to demand; whereas in the other it would have been always receiving and always demanding more, because the payment could never have amounted to a full sum. In the punishment of creatures, justice would have had its due by parcels, but in Christ it hath its full demand; and this may be pleaded with God by a believer. This is the knowledge of God we have by Christ, which is as terrible to any impenitent as it is comfortable to a penitent believer.

(5.) The holiness of God is manifested by Christ. His justice is founded in his holiness: 'The holy God is sanctified in righteousness,' Isa. v. 16. His holiness is illustrated by his justice; he is exalted in judgment and sanctified in righteousness. Had not Christ died upon the cross, we had not had a discovery of the ingratitude and baseness there was in the first sin against God and in all that followed it; nor could we have had so full a prospect of the holiness and purity of God's nature as in the dreadful punishment of Christ for sin, because sin never appeared in its blackest and bloodiest colours, and nothing was ever able to shew us the true tincture of sin comparably to the blood of the Son of God. This perfection did sparkle in the commands of the law, which he gave angels and men for the rule of their obedience. The constancy of this holiness appeared in the renewing the law in tables of stone to the Jews, adding thereunto the ceremonial law, made up of sacrifices of beasts for the expiation of sin, as typical of a greater sacrifice, whereby he would declare that he would never be pleased with iniquity. But this manifestation was with a fainter light than in a crucified Christ. If ever sin appeared odious, it was in the death of his Son. Here we see nothing but frowns and displeasures against the breach of his righteous law, his detestation of sin to be as great as his indignation, his hatred of it to be as infinite as his wrath against it, both joining hand in hand together to declare the contrariety between the beauty of the one and deformity of the other, striking it to the heart, and condemning it for ever to that death and dissolution the greatness of the evil had merited, and publishing an irreconcilable enmity to the filthiness and loathsomeness of it, shewing that he would rather have his Son die than sin live. He never declared the heinousness of sin in itself, and its hatefulness to himself, so much by all the vials of judgments poured out upon the world, by all the flames and torments of hell, as by the humiliation, groans, and sufferings of his only Son. That was the hatred of sin in the persons of his creatures, this his hatred of it in the person of the man his fellow, bearing his indignation for sins never committed by him, wherein he was both 'white and ruddy,' Cant. v. 10, an innocent and a sufferer; pure in innocence and ruddy with blood. It was the intention of God to manifest

his holiness and his justice in this affair. When he was accused—Mal. ii. 17, 'Every one that doth evil is good in his sight'—that he delighted in evil men, and had stripped himself of his holiness and justice, and seemed to countenance the wicked in his providential dispensations, the answer the prophet by the Spirit of God gives to this charge is, Mal. iii. 1, that the Lord should come into his temple (a place approved to Christ in the Gospel), whereby I shall make a full discovery that I neither delight in evil nor will suffer it to go unpunished. And by righteousness which God declares in the death of Christ, Rom. iii. 26, some understand the holiness of God, which is evidenced by his being just and a justifier. He is first just, that he may, with the honour of his holiness and justice, justify the sinner believing in Christ, whence the great praises of God in the Revelations, as well as in Isaiah vi., a gospel vision, are for this perfection of holiness, Rev. iv. 8, xv. 4. And herein the holiness of God may be considered with delight, which did before affright the sinner, and make him deplore the impossibility of his own or any other's standing before so pure a majesty, 1 Sam. vi. 20. It is not only discovered in Christ, but honoured; and justice, the fruit of it, being satisfied, both smile upon men capacitated by Christ to stand comfortably before both of them. It is declared also in setting us so exact a pattern as the holy of holies visibly for our imitation in all ways of humility, self-denial, obedience, and love to God. The sum is this: Though God had manifested the purity of his nature in his threatening annexed to the law, and in the punishment of man after he had sinned, and in the law by the sacrifices of beasts, yet these manifested God's hatred of sin very little in comparison of the death of his Son. God being more willing to punish sin in his Son than to leave it unpunished, shews an extreme hatred of iniquity.*

(6.) The veracity and truth of God is manifested in Christ. Christ 'gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time,' 1 Tim. ii. 6, τὸ μαρτυρίον, for a testimony (it is a noun, not a verb): a testimony not only of his grace, and the abundant goodness of God in redemption, that he would have all men to be saved, ver. 4, excluding none who have the conditions of faith and repentance; but also a testimony of the truth of his first promise, constituting him the only mediator as the seed of the woman. His passion was a testimony of the veracity of God in that promise whereby it was accomplished. 'Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,' John i. 17; grace in regard of our pardon, truth in the regard of the promise. This attribute was highly discovered, in making good the promise of the seed of the woman, after so many revolutions of time, weary expectations of his coming, contrary appearances, a stay of four thousand years between the promise and the performance; whereby the faith of the ancient believer was almost nonplussed, had not God supported it by a succession of prophetic predictions, as assurances that he would make good his word; all which were to the utmost point fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Christ. His veracity, in the promises of assistance made to Christ in this great undertaking, which were the objects of our Saviour's confidence: Isa. l. 7, 9, 'The Lord God will help me;' which were accomplished in bearing up the human nature under such a sea and load of sufferings, making his arm bare rather than his truth should sink in the promises made either to his Son or his creatures.

Veracity in his threatenings; he had declared in paradise his certain resolution to punish the violations of his law, which he could not recede from, without making a breach upon the holiness of the Deity. This threatening, which Satan had made man believe that God would falsify, he kept up without any spot upon his truth, any breach of his word, and yet disap-

* Mestrezat in Heb. i. 3, pp. 98, 99.

pointed the devil of the great end he aimed at in his lie. He makes in Christ the threatenings of the law and the promises of the gospel kiss each other; both live comfortably together, and the honour of his truth is preserved in both, which have contrary aspects, as far distant as heaven and earth, east and west in the furthest points, so that it was an impossibility in the judgment of men, that God could be true to himself, and be merciful to men, if he were immutably true to his threatening. God starts not one step from his word, breaks not one tittle of his righteous commination; his threatenings are as certain as they are dreadful, and rather than one iota of them shall pass away, or be accounted an empty word, or a copy of his countenance, he will give up his Son for the breach of that law to which his sharp threatening was annexed. Herein the immutability of God is declared to be as great in his will as in his nature. It is impossible for him to lie, though for the saving his Son from death; which gives us such a representation of God in the infallibility of his promises, as affords us a strong consolation, Heb. vi. 17, 18. The soul that knows Christ cannot but without scruple rest upon his word, and think nothing more becoming him than to credit God, who hath been punctual in keeping his word, though the relation of a Son, the miseries to be endured by this Son of his love, and also the yearnings of his bowels, stood in the way to move him to a breach of his word, had it been possible; and since God hath not the same reason to fall back from this word of promise (which is a demonstration of his goodness natural to him), as he seems to have had to fall back from that wherein his justice, his strange work was to be manifested, the soul is carried out to a reliance on him beyond any rational possibility of a doubt. If ever he would have denied himself, it would have been in the case of his Son, whose prayer for the passing away of the cup could not make him alter one tittle of what had passed from his lips. When his own glory in the good of his creature was concerned, he could not deny himself, 1 Tim. ii. 13; no, nor in the concerns of his Son. He hath hereby declared, that if he be wanting to his faithfulness, he would be wanting to his nature; and to break his word, would be to deny his deity; which is such a discovery of God, as dreadful to an impenitent, as delightful to a believer; for he hath manifested his truth to be as much his nature, as his holiness, grace, and justice.

(7.) The power of God is manifested in Christ. Hence Christ is called 'the power of God,' as well as 'the wisdom of God,' 1 Cor. i. 24. Not only in the fruits of the gospel upon the hearts of men, but in his office, wherein was manifested the power of God in redeeming the world. It was in him God tore up the foundations of the devil's empire, disarmed all the curses of the law, overthrew the false conceits of the world, knocked off the fetters of their captivity, demolished the power of death, snatched souls from the flames of hell, unbarred the gates of heaven, prepared everlasting mansions, 'laid his beams in the waters,' the foundations of an happy eternity in the misery, afflictions, death, blood of his only Son. He restored man to glory by weakness, to wisdom by foolishness; he made the law lose its sting in the sides of him whom it struck, took away our captivity by misery, flung death to the ground by death, quenched hell by its own flames, opened heaven by a cross, cemented an everlasting habitation by blood, and condemned sin by a sacrifice for it. By a crucified man, and a weak flesh encompassed with infirmity, the God of heaven subdues the god of the world, destroys the empire of the proud spirits, and subdues principalities and powers under his feet, who besides their usurped authority had a vast ambition to preserve it, and a strength and subtlety unconquerable by the power of man; and hereby shews, that no evil was so great but his almighty arm could put in

execution, what his immense wisdom had provided as a remedy against it. By his strength he gives a being to his own word and promise, when neither angels nor man could conceive the methods of the execution, even after the promise of bruising Satan by the seed of the woman was declared. It is seen in raising Christ from the dead, after he had sustained the weight of the sin of the world upon him, and bringing him forth with success and glory, after that great encounter with the powers of hell; which power is called 'the glory of the Father:' Rom. vi. 4, 'As Christ was raised up from the dead, by the glory of the Father,' *διὰ δόξης*; *by the glory of the Father*, as noting the efficient cause, or *to the glory of the Father*, as noting the final cause, being for the glory of God's power. In powerfully raising a church to him from the seed of his blood, in spite of all spiritual and secular enemies, defending it and supporting it under the most terrible waves of the world, that he might be acknowledged, adored, and praised in this world, and that which is to come. The power of God is not so manifest in laying the foundation of the earth, stretching out the heavens, turning the wheel of providence, as in this, which is the topstone of all his providences in the world, to which they tend, and wherein they centre. 'Twice we have heard that power belongs to God,' Ps. lxii. 11, 12. 'Also unto thee, O Lord, belongs mercy.' Once we have heard of it in creation; more gloriously in the work of redemption, wherein his power and his grace were linked together, as well as in creation his power and his goodness. And this is a comfortable manifestation of God, his power is as great as his mercy, and they join hands together. His power is known in Christ to be able to save us without giving his enemies any ground to reproach him; and his mercy is made known, whereby he is willing to save us.

Use. If the true and saving knowledge of God is only in and by Jesus Christ, it will afford us matter for our,

I. Information, and it informs us,

1. Of the insufficiency of reason without revelation. Though there be some relics of the law of nature, like Seth's pillars, standing in the heart, the mind of man paved with some broken pieces of the tables of the law, yet among all those fragments there is not one that hath the inscription of Christ the mediator upon it. Nature never preached the doctrine of a Saviour, and the necessity of faith; and therefore by all the endowments of nature the soul cannot be informed of the true nature of God. Mere reason in innocency was never a key fitted to all the wards of divine mysteries. The beauty of God is not discerned in the same way as we discern the beauty of nature. Reason, though it be 'the candle of the Lord,' Prov. xx. 27, yet it is but a candle, and can no more discover the nature of God as he is to be known in Christ, than a candle can help us to see the sun when it is masked by a thick cloud. We cannot comprehend what is revealed of God in the creature, much less can we arrive to that by our own reason, which no creature under heaven, nor in heaven, of the highest endowments, can make known to us without a revelation from God. Reason presents us but with some dark shadows or notions of God only.

(1.) Reason is blind in the things of God. Can we render a satisfactory reason of anything under our feet, and thoroughly uncipher the characters of nature? How can we then unlock the cabinet of God? If we understand not what is below us, how can we understand what is above us? If we could picture the soul of man in his lapsed state, it must be painted without eyes, covered with a thick mist, more crooked in his will and affections than anything can be misshapen and monstrous under the heavens. A clear-eyed

reason can only be in an uncorrupted soul. Never speak of right reason in the things of God without a supernatural illumination, and the guidance of revelation, till you can shew a soul free from all manner of corruption, as white as snow, and as innocent as a standing angel. Since the fall there is as little of pure reason in our minds, as there is of an exact holiness in our will, and the Spirit is as necessary to enlighten the one as to incline the other, the one being as full of prejudices and mistaken principles as the other of corrupt and perverse habits. Hence man is represented in Scripture, Eph. iv. 17-19, with a mind as vain as his will is crooked, an understanding as much darkened towards God as his will is alienated from the life of God, as great a blindness of heart as there is madness of affection, and therefore the apostle gives it no better a title than darkness, Eph. v. 8, comprehending thereby the race of all mankind naturally. And what can better express the deplorable nature of the mind and reason, which so many men are proud of, than darkness, the horror of the world, the cloud to the beauty of it, the distracter of the fancy, and the spring of fears? It is by darkness we are blinded from seeing the comeliness of things in the world; it is in darkness we have the most affrighting fancies; and such a dismal thing is man fallen, without any power to open his own eyes, without any more ability to become light in the Lord than darkness hath to change itself into the light of the sun. Man is said to have no more understanding in regard of the spiritual things of God than a beast, Ps. xlix. 20. Not a man as considered in Adam, and upon that root, that understands God, Rom. iii. 17. He is blind as to the object which he was created to know and contemplate. The world, by all 'the wisdom of God' discovered in the creation, 'knew not God,' 1 Cor. i. 21. By all those things wherein the wisdom of God appeared in creation and providence, in regard of the order, harmony, beauty, and effects of them, the world, with all their reasons and speculations, were ignorant of God. All worldly wisdom cannot remove that darkness which is upon the understanding as to heavenly things; for the corruption like smoke rising up still from the furnace of that hell in the heart, darkens the heavens from our sight, and it is as impossible that we should know God while our corruption remains in its full force, as that an eye, bemisted by an uninterrupted succession of thick vapours from other parts of the body, can clearly behold any object. Peter, whose eyes were something opened, thought he had great reason to dissuade Christ from suffering, but his Master sharply rebukes him, and tells him he did not 'savour the things of God,' Mat. xvi. 23, he understood not the nature and design of God. The blindness of reason is seen, by considering that most of the reason we have in the world is the fruit of education. What a miserable thing would a man be, if he were bred up among beasts in a desert! What a stupid statue of a man would he be, rather than a man! There is no knowledge of God, man since the fall can lay claim to by his own reason, without some common illumination. We know nothing of God by the creatures, but as God spreads an inward light upon the mind. In nature there is a manifestation *in us*, as well as a manifestation *to us*, Rom. i. 19, yet it is a common illumination.

(2.) Reason is uncertain. It is a wandering vagabond, coins lies, and reports falsities as truths. Is it not more often deceived in things of a divine concern which are above our natural capacity, than the sense is in sensible objects, which often mistakes things because of their distance? Is not the whole scene of nature troubled with janglings and controversies? What knowledge is there in the world that is not perplexed with a thousand doubts? Is not that interest, education, and often passion, which we call

reason? Are not our minds often seduced by our humours, and drawn aside by a faction of passions? How can that mind which is swayed by the bestial part of man frame right notions of God? Do the beasts that perish understand him? And man is no better since the fall. Is the knowledge of God bred and nourished by flesh and blood? Some of the heathens were so sensible of this uncertainty, that they counted it their only knowledge, that they knew nothing as they ought to know; and some of them believed that God from heaven could only be the revealer of truth. So much are men's thoughts entangled in divine things.

(3.) Reason in a natural man is an enemy to the knowledge of God in Christ. It receives not the light that shines upon it, John i. 5. It offers a strong resistance, it reflects it back, as a stone wall doth the beams of the sun, without suffering the light to pierce into any part of it. It is from hence the gospel hath not the same advantage upon men, as things of a moral concern, which are written in the law and have a counterpart in the remainders of the law of nature in the heart of a man. But the gospel finds nothing of kin to it in the soul, but rather principles that oppose it; the mysteries of Christ, wherein the grace, justice, wisdom of God are discovered, seem foolishness to a natural mind. It seems to them a folly to imagine, that God should put his Son to death for the demonstration of his justice, that man should be justified by his blood; and upon this account it is that the apostle saith, 1 Cor. ii. 14, that 'a natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him.' He doth not say a *carnal* man, but an *animal*, a *soullly* man; he doth not speak of one led by the affections of the flesh, but those wise men that are led by flashy reason, and by the common estimated wisdom and principles of the world, and order their lives according to the rational dictates of the world; such an one 'receives not the things of the Spirit of God,' he doth not say receives not the things of God, for he knows something of God; but not the things of the Spirit of God, *i. e.* he knows not God evangelically, embraceth not, apprehends not, affects not, the knowledge of God in Christ in the gospel spirit. The reason is, because 'they are foolishness to him.' If the apostle meant a man wallowing in sensual pleasures, and conducted by his bestial appetite, he might rather say, Such an one receives them not because they savour of wisdom, because they are against the pleasures of the flesh, than because he accounts them foolish; but he is one given to the study of wisdom, and disaffects them, because he thinks them contrary to that which he thinks wisdom, to that which hath prepossessed his mind. No sensual man in the world can in his own judgment and conscience disapprove of things morally good, and known so by the common light of nature as foolish; but such an one rejects and hates the knowledge of God in the gospel; for as a rich man hates nothing more than poverty, a sensual man nothing more than a seriousness and sobriety of life, so a wise man hates nothing more than that which he thinks to be folly. With what contempt did the Athenians reject the doctrine Paul preached to them, under no civiler a title than that of babbling! Acts xvii. 18. Carnal reason is the most furious beast in the world. A natural wise man is too lofty to know God in divine methods, who is best discerned in a way of humility and self-denial. And at the best, the notions of God, by the representations of reason without Christ, lose much of their majesty, beauty, and commanding power over the hearts of men, they are weak and faint, for it is a representation by a declining and disproportioned light.

From what has been said in this case, it follows,

(1.) That there is a necessity of revelation and illumination. There

must be first an external revelation of the object ; and secondly, an internal illumination of the faculty. There is a *word* of revelation, which is the gospel revealed to the understandings of men ; there is a *Spirit* of revelation requisite besides, which the apostle begs for the Ephesians, who had the object already revealed to them, that their understandings might be further enlightened, Eph. i. 17 ; so that the further understanding of God and his mysteries in the gospel, after the first illumination, is not a work of the bare reason and understanding of man, without further operations of the Spirit in and upon them.

Suppose that the light of reason were come to that point, to know that our chief good consisted in communion with God,* yet no man could know that God was of such a gracious and condescending nature, and were willing to communicate himself in the choicest manner, since man was a sinner and had incurred his wrath and malediction, without some divine revelation which must discover God to be of such an encouraging nature.

(2.) We ought to submit our reason to revelation. God doth not give us reason to quarrel with, but to discern and entertain divine revelation. He hath given us reason to examine revelations, whether they bear a divine stamp upon them. He hath not therefore imposed things upon men without undeniable characters of their divine authority. Whatsoever hath been revealed which reason could not of itself reach, has been attended with miracles which could not be wrought by any created power, and bore the marks of omnipotency upon them. We have not reason to comprehend all the parts of divine revelation, shall we therefore deny it to be from God ? Adam, and the angels, too, in heaven, may with as much reason turn atheists because they cannot comprehend God. Some truths revealed may, if not be formally demonstrated by reason, yet receive some clearness and evidence from it after they are revealed. But as Adam had, and the angels have, clear reason to prove to themselves, and experience too, that there is a God, though they cannot fathom the infinite depths of his nature ; so there is clear reason to manifest the Scripture which gives us a declaration of Christ to be the revelation of God, though we cannot grasp all the parts of that divine revelation, and make every *thesis* therein clear to a natural reason. There are such arguments for it that contradicting ingenious reason cannot but be startled at. We ought therefore to submit our reasonings to God's declaration. The rational creature was made to serve God. His reason, then, ought to be held in the rank of a servant ; the light of reason ought to veil to the author of reason, and the light in the mind ought to veil to him who enlightened it when man came into the world. Reason ought to follow faith, not precede it. The stars borrow their light from the sun, not the sun from the stars. Reason, indeed, may come in with an auxiliary force after a revelation is made, for the maintaining the truth of it, and clearing it up to the minds of others, and may be a servant to revelation now under Christ, as well as it should have been to any revelation in the state of innocence. We ought therefore to submit our reason to God, not think to mate him in knowledge any more than we can in majesty and infiniteness, nor set up a spark to vie with the sun. Pride put out Adam's eye at first ; and the pride of reason cherished will continue us as blind as beetles in the things of a heavenly concern.

2. Information. The excellency of the gospel and Christian religion. The Christian religion is a perspective wherewith to look to heaven, it presents us with that knowledge of God which neither all the angels in heaven, nor creatures upon earth, were ever able without Christ to convey

* Mestrezat.

to us. Christ's being the image of God is a reason why the gospel is so glorious, 2 Cor. iv. 4, 1 Tim. i. 11. It is called 'the glorious gospel of the blessed God,' wherein the glory of God's perfection shines forth, because in that Christ is made known to us, and in him the beauty of God is displayed to our view. The knowledge of God in nature was in darkness, in the law it was in shadows, in the gospel it is in light. In nature it was a light as at midnight, under the law as in the dawning, in the gospel as at sun-rising; for by reason the knowledge was by candle-light, in the law by torch-light, in the gospel by a sunbeam. The doctrine of the Trinity, obscurely delivered in the Old Testament, is more cleared up since the coming of the Messiah, which could never have been found out by reason, nor yet can be demonstrated by reason, though it be capable to furnish us with some illustrations of it. The heathens disputed about God, and the Christians know him. It answers the ends of all religion. Religion respects God; it must have the knowledge of God therefore for a foundation. If it hath not the right knowledge of God, it is superstition. All true religion conduceth to the creature's duty and happiness; our duty and happiness is to know and love God. This religion only gives us a knowledge of God honourable to him, and presents us with inducements to love him comfortable to ourselves; and whatsoever makes God known to man in his own glory, and for man's comfort, is certainly in reason the most excellent religion. Whatsoever renders God venerable and amiable to the minds of men is true; for it cannot be supposed that infinite goodness should create the world, and communicate itself with a design to be hated and contemned by his creatures, but to be feared and loved. Whatsoever therefore doth present God in the richest streams of goodness to the creature, with honour to himself, hath truth for the foundation of it.

(1.) This religion represents God with honour. It renders God as just as merciful, and as merciful as just. It sets forth the riches of the one without darkening the glory of the other. It presents God in the depths of his wisdom, heights of his love, equity of his justice, stability of his truth, beauty of his holiness, wonders of his patience, and glory of his power, without offering violence to any principle of reason. The gospel is most divine in the articles to be believed of God, most magnificent in its promises, unquestionably holy and advantageous to the world in its precepts. It unveils a God to encourage to duty, and twists our duty with God's honour. What can be more reasonable? or how can the creature honour God more than to fear his justice, trust in his goodness, turn to him because of his mercy, depend upon his truth, and glorify his grace, accept of a righteousness from him, and be freed from guilt by him? It pulls the creature from itself to make it all in and by God. It brings God to the state of a God, and the creature to a creature's posture; it sets God upon his throne and the creature at his feet, exalts heaven and depresseth earth. It shews us that God is all our repose, that our rest and felicity is to love him. It shews us the unreasonableness and folly of our natural conceits of God. It discourages everything that hinders us from a conjunction with him; instructs us to abhor everything that made our separation from him, to embrace everything that may further our return to him, and renders man incapable of any centre, any end by himself, any repose but in him. Where is God set out more illustriously, and with greater incitements to love him? Since his love to man hath reached the highest point, what is wanting to heat us, what is wanting to inflame us? But do we not disgrace this honourable religion by not elevating our souls to God, having hearts as cold as ice, and like salamanders, that cannot burn in the midst of such a fire?

(2.) It represents God with unspeakable comfort to the creature. The first notions of God in the gospel flash like lightning with comfort upon the disconsolate soul. He discovers himself as a Father of mercy, because the Father of Christ; as a God of tenderness and consolation; as a God that would enter into the heart with all his sweetness if we would but open; would spread his wings over our souls and dwell in the midst of us, unite us in eternal bands to himself. He sends to us 'the express image of his person,' Heb. i. 3, one of his own nature to take ours, that we may freely converse with him in that image, which we could not immediately with God because of the distance of our nature. A communion between man and a creature of different nature is hard; man cannot converse with an angel or a beast, much less with God. But the Godhead holds out his hand in the humanity of Christ, to take us by the hand and lead us into his chambers. In Christ, God condescends to shew his face to the creature, whereby he renders his nature amiable, and the believing creature comfortable. There is such a knowledge of God in it as can comfort a man upon a deathbed, appease his conscience, direct his eye to a delightful sight of another world, make him embrace death with joy; such advantages as the knowledge of God, in the whole book of nature, all political skill, and the choicest speculations, cannot afford a man. These things delight him at present, help him to pass his life with some content, but are unable to administer the least cordial dram at a dying hour. In other religions we may know something of God, little of our own misery, nothing of a remedy; but in the gospel we know God, ourselves, our misery, and our medicine. We see a God fit to be trusted by us, one that hath given the greatest evidence of his care of the world. No stronger testimony can be given than his sending his Son to declare it; acting so about his Son, and in his Son. Who can question the providence of God, and his taking care of human affairs? Who can dispute the tenderness of his bowels, when he hath writ his care and compassions in the blood of his only begotten?

(3.) The knowledge of God in Christ hath in the gospel been mighty successful. Whatsoever discovery of God was among the heathens before the manifestation of Christ did soon veil to that which was discovered by him. The idols fell down at his feet, Dagon gave way to the ark, and that which was limited to the Jewish nation extended itself to the utmost bounds of the earth, and brought people to the acknowledgment of one God in his glory and sovereignty, as it had been predicted: Zech. xiv. 9, 'And the Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one.' The mountain of the Lord's house was lifted up above all the idolatrous mountains, and the whole frame of idolatry the devil had erected and preserved so many ages in the world against the traditions left by Adam was demolished; and so much hath God been discovered in his truth, that not one of those heathen idols, so much famed in their writers, is acknowledged for a god in any part of the world. In the eastern parts, indeed, they have some idols where the Christian religion is expired, but the names of Jupiter, Apollo, &c., are wholly buried among those nations that before adored them, and scarce any part of the world that we know of doth acknowledge now a multiplicity of gods. The discovery of Christ hath been the cause of this. The Turks, who acknowledge Mahomet for a prophet, yet acknowledge him not for a god. The true God, that had been cast out of the world by the subtlety of the devil, and had confined himself in his worship to the small spot of Judea, is restored by Christ to the knowledge of men, and to a worship due to him, and the adored idols sunk at the foot of the cross. The knowledge of God covered the earth in respect of plenty and abundance, as the waters cover

the sea; superstition was demolished, and errors about God dispersed. Hath not, then, the gospel and the Christian religion the greatest trophies? Can anything claim an equal honour with it? Is there any religion in the world whereby God hath been so fully discovered, restored to his right, to that right which the common reason of the world must acknowledge due to God? It hath defaced no notions of God which were according to true reason, but cleared them, given us the reasons of those proceedings of God, obscure before, and added a worthy and satisfactory account of God, which innocent reason could not reach, and the most corrupted reason hath no firm ground to quarrel with; all which cannot be ascribed to any other profession in the world but the Christian. This is the glory of the gospel, this is the fruit of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

3. Information. How inexcusable is the ignorance of God in them that hear so often! God was but faintly discovered in the creatures, in the Jewish time was obscured by shadows, but that which was a mystery in former ages is clearly revealed, so that there is now no mysteriousness in the nature of God, so far as to hinder our direction to a happy enjoyment of him. The things of God are as plain as the sun, so that whatsoever ignorance there is of him under the preaching of the gospel is not invincible, but affected. Every man under the gospel may be greater in point of knowledge than John the Baptist. Shall any man behold the beams of the sun every day, and not cast his eyes up to see that body from whence they shoot? With what face can we call ourselves Christians, if we have no desire to know God as revealed in Christ? Shall we worship a God we know not? Are we created by God and preserved by God, yet are content to be wilfully ignorant of him, to whom we owe our being and preservation? Can we pretend any affections to him whom we desire not to understand? A worse charge will be brought against, and a sharper punishment inflicted on, such, than upon the heathens, who were 'given up to a reprobate mind,' because they 'liked not to retain God in their knowledge,' Rom. i. 28, when it was a knowledge only by the dim light of creatures. What do they deserve that will not embrace nor retain the knowledge of God by a clearer light in Christ? It was the end of the whole creation to point us to God, Ps. xix. civ.; it was the end of the work of redemption to bring us to an acquaintance with God. By a wilful ignorance of God, we cross both the end of creation and redemption, and slight God as our first maker, benefactor, and restorer. He that doth not know God in Christ has no true knowledge of God absolutely, because it is no God as conceived by him, and packed together of various inventions of his own; it is not a God according to Christ's revelations, but his own imagination and fancy.

II. Use of exhortation.

1. Let those that have the knowledge of God in Christ bless him for it. The seventh day was appointed to bless God for the discovery of his goodness and other perfections in the creation. The first day is ordained wherein we should bless God for the discovery of his perfections in redemption. The 'name of Christ' should be as an ointment poured forth,' Cant. i. 3; we should delight in the fragrantcy, and praise him for the odours and savours of it. The patriarchs had a knowledge of Christ, and therefore a knowledge of God afar off, Heb. xi. 13; they saw the promises afar off (*i. e.* the promises of the Messiah), obscure and dark: men have not a distinct sight of the objects they see at a distance. What reason have we to render the praise due to the name of God for bringing us, as it were, to see him face to face! Christ bestows a blessing upon such, which was denied to many prophets and kings, referring to the knowledge of the Father by his revelation of him,

Luke x. 22–24, as though the old believers saw nothing nor heard anything, yet they that were pronounced blessed then had not seen Christ dying and rising, and the coming of the Spirit, whereby the apostles had a clearer knowledge of the nature of God. We have the full testimony of it in the gospel. What blessing should we reflect back upon God, and how should our hearts be filled with venerations of him! And where there is the knowledge of God in Christ, it will be perfected in time in all the fruits of it. In Christ, God is our God in covenant, to communicate himself to us in all things we are capable of;* as when the sun communicates itself to us, it is to enlighten us with that light which it hath. When a knowing man communicates himself to one ignorant, it is to give him part of his knowledge. If creatures communicate their goods according to their condition, God will also render us partakers of a divine condition, which extends to the banishing all ignorance and errors, and to the bestowing on us a fulness of wisdom and knowledge, as well as holiness and happiness, as much as the condition of the creature will permit; therefore glory not in riches and strength, or anything else, but 'glory in this, that you know the Lord,' Jer. ix. 23, 24.

2. Let such as want the knowledge of God in Christ endeavour for it. It is by this we gain a union with God. When we have an understanding to know the true God, we are then 'in him which is true:' 1 John v. 20, 'And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ.' God lives in such, and they in him. We are united to him who is truly discovered in his Son Jesus Christ. Calvin observes this intimation from the apostle's expressing it without a copulative, for the particle *even* is not in the Greek. Those that seek to know God without Christ have not any light that can satisfy them; they know that there is one God, but they have no means of union to him, or communion with him, without the mediator. Without Christ we can neither know God nor know ourselves. Without him there is nothing but darkness and ground of despair, nothing but confusion to us appears in the nature of God, nothing but trouble and misery in our own nature.† We are desirous God should know us in our misery, and know our want and indigence we lie under; and is it not a folly for us not to know God in his fulness? We can make but slender guesses at God till we see him in the face of a mediator.

To this end,

1. Study the gospel. The gospel hath the same titles in part that Christ hath. It is called the power of God, and the wisdom of God; as instrumentally it declares Christ to the world, who is essentially the power and wisdom of God, and mediatorily and by way of excellency, as he discovers the perfections of God to the world; and the gospel is so by way of subserviency, to inform our understandings, conduct us to God, and excite our motions. It is in this God makes the church's windows as agates, Isa. liv. 12, 13, or, as others, jasper stone, clear as crystal, more fit for windows than dark agates. And, indeed, the light of the church is compared to jasper, as Rev. xxi. 11. The issue of all is to be taught of the Lord. It is unworthy for any man to trifle away his time in the knowledge of human things, with a neglect of this. Should not an eye-salve be more desirable to a blind man for the restoration of his sight, than a purple robe? What comfort can learning, riches, greatness, yea, a thorny crown and sceptre, be to one as blind as a mole in spiritual things? Angels know more than any creatures, of the depths of God's wisdom in creation; they see the several engines

* Mestrezat, ser. iv. sur. Heb. viii. pp. 407, 408.

† Pascal, Pens. p. 151.

whereby the creatures perform their motions, yet they are not said to inquire into those things, or please themselves with philosophical meditations, but to be students in the wisdom of God, in the mysteries of the gospel, which presents them with a scheme of God, more ravishing than that in creation. The knowledge of God in the gospel is more glorious than the knowledge of God by nature, as much as Scripture revelation is above natural reason. There hath been something of God in Christ known in the church, ever since the first promise of the seed of the woman. Abraham saw Christ's day afar off, the prophets predicted him, he was wrapt in types, the Israelites beheld him in their paschal lamb, the stricken broached rock, the nourishing manna, the divine propitiatory, and the daily sacrifices. But what is all this to the knowledge of him by the gospel, and consequently the knowledge of God by him since his incarnation, since the shadows fled away, and the sun hath appeared in its splendour?

2. Submit yourselves to the prophetic office of Christ as his disciples. He is as real a prophet now to instruct the soul, as he is a priest to intercede for it, or a king to rule it. As God is propitious through Christ, so he is only an instructor through Christ. As the power of God in the conversion of the soul, so the wisdom of God in the instruction of the soul, breaks out through Christ. He only that can bring us to glory, can guide us by his eye, Ps. xxxii. 8. He is the Lord that shews us light, Ps. cxviii. 27. If we would have light, we must use the beams of the sun. If we would be knowing, we must have recourse to some skilful person in the science we would learn. Resignation to Christ is the first step to divine knowledge. Christ will not teach any that proudly strut against his office. It is the master's delight to teach an inquisitive and humble scholar. It was 'given' to the disciples, those that had devoted themselves to him, 'to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God,' Mark iv. 11. Receive him, therefore, as the great prophet of God's appointing, furnished with skill to propose to you the knowledge of God, and efficacious ability to imprint it upon your minds by an inward illumination. Have a solemn veneration for the letter of the gospel; but lift up your eyes to Christ as a prophet, begging of him to open the eyes and seal instruction, to unlock the soul and enlighten the understanding; and say as Zophar to Job, 'Oh that God would teach and shew me the secrets of wisdom!' Job xi. 6. He is God's interpreter; to discover God was the end of his coming. His office is to teach; put him upon the exercise of it. He hath a charge from the Father to declare his name, he will not be unfaithful in it. Plead his charge, he hath promised to declare it; urge him with his truth.

3. Endeavour after suitable affections to whatsoever you know of God in Christ. Let the holiness of God in Christ be the awe of your souls. Let us not dandle any sin which God so hates, that he would not remit it without the price of the blood of his Son. Tremble at that justice which drank such draughts of precious blood in the punishment of sin, and consider every sin in its utmost demerit. Admire and bless that wisdom, which made itself so eminent in the untying so many knots, passing over such mountains of difficulties that he might shew himself a hater of sin and a lover of his creatures, that he might entwine his mercy and justice in perpetual embraces. Let us have as strong affections of love and joy, as the devils, by their knowledge of God as discovered in Christ, have of horror and hatred. We see in that, not only the manifestation, but the satisfaction of his justice; they see the manifestation of it, and the dissatisfaction of it for ever with them. They have such a knowledge of God in Christ, as to awaken their consciences; we may have such a knowledge of God in Christ, as to calm our consciences.

Their terrors are as much increased by that discovery, as a believer's comfort. They behold God in Christ, their implacable and inexorable judge; we may behold God in Christ, a tender and condescending Father. They know a God in our nature, imparting his own nature to us; and refusing their nature, to leave them to lie in their fallen state for ever. The terrible attributes become sweet in Christ to man, and more dreadful to them. Let the motions of your will, and the affections of your soul, rise according to the elevation of your knowledge of God in Christ, more or less.

To conclude; let us behold his justice, to humble ourselves under it; his pardoning grace, to have recourse to it under pressures of guilt. Let us sweeten our affections by the sight of his compassions, and have confidence to call upon him as a Father in our necessities. Not any discovery of God in Christ, but is an encouragement to a forlorn creature, lost in his own sense. His perfections smile upon man; nothing of God looks terrible in Christ to a believer. The sun is risen, shadows are vanished, God walks upon the battlements of love, justice hath left its sting in a Saviour's side, the law is disarmed, weapons out of his hand, his bosom open, his bowels yearn, his heart pants, sweetness and love is in all his carriage. And this is life eternal, to know God believingly in the glories of his mercy and justice in Jesus Christ.

A DISCOURSE OF CONVICTION OF SIN.

And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believed not on me.—
JOHN XVI. 8, 9.

OUR Saviour in this chapter shews what was the intention of his discourse in the former, which was, first, to forewarn his disciples of, and forearm them against, the violence they should meet with in the world after his departure from them, in the chapter foregoing, ver. 20; which violence should be the hotter against them, because it would be thought an acceptable service unto God to assault them with the sharpest persecutions. He therefore wisheth them to remember what he had said, in the fourth verse of this chapter: 'But these things I have told you, that when the time shall come, you may remember that I told you of them.' He knew the jealousies of men's hearts, how apt upon every occasion they are to make unjust reflections. Therefore, saith he, consider it well, and do not have hard thoughts of me, when you come to feel these sufferings I now speak of. I tell you before of them, that you may have no cause to blame me, as one that dealt falsely with you in concealing the sting, while I present you with the honey. No; I acquaint you with the worst as well as the best part, the bitterest as well as the sweetest. Then, secondly, he supports his drooping disciples, who began to faint at the thoughts of his departure, John xv. 26; and also in this chapter, which he doth by the promise of a Comforter to be sent unto them.

You may observe, first, that God doth not send any affliction upon his people, without providing them also a cordial; as a wise physician, who prescribes a purge to carry away the corrupt humours, and a cordial to support the spirits. Our Saviour tells them of the Comforter that should refresh them, as well as acquaints them with that misery that might deject them. The same was God's procedure with our first parents after the fall: first, he revives them with a gracious promise, before he denounceth a grievous standing sentence upon them. And,

Secondly, Observe that God sends afflictions on his dearest children. These apostles that were the salt of the Jewish nation, preserving them from a total putrefaction, those that Christ had laid in his bosom, revealed the secrets of his Father, and the mysteries of redemption to, and prayed for their preservation, and intended to do it further in a solemn manner (as he

did in the following chapter), had culled them out as witnesses to bear up his name in the world, and given them an assurance of being in glory with him; yet these must be hated, and killed, and depressed under the violence of the wicked world.

The miseries they should endure are two, John xvi. 2:

First, Excommunication: 'They shall put you out of the synagogues.' The Jews should not think them worthy to be in the church.

Secondly, Destruction: 'Whosoever killeth you will think he doth God service. They should not be thought worthy to live in the world.

And the grounds of this violent proceeding are two:

(1.) Superstitious zeal. They shall think they do God good service in so doing.

(2.) Blind ignorance: ver. 3, 'These things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father.' These are the two great grounds of all persecutions that are in the world, superstitious zeal and blind ignorance. You may observe,

First, How often is religion pretended to justify cruelty! God had not any church in the world but among the Jews at that time, yet the body of them do set themselves in opposition against those few disciples that bore up the name of Christ in the world, and under the pretence of religion they would send them out of the world. So contrary to the main design of God, which is to promote charity to man, as well as love to himself.

Secondly, Nothing is so great an enemy to true Christianity as ignorant zeal; nothing so hurtful as passion, clothed with the purple of a seeming piety. A zealous Paul will be a persecuting Paul, because zealous in the external part of the Jewish religion. The superstitious Jews did more oppose the progress of the gospel than either the profane sort among them, or the blind heathen.

Thirdly, We may observe in the chapter how Christ giveth them the reason why he acquainted them with these things now, and withal, why he did not tell them of them before: ver. 4, 'These things I have told you, that, when the time shall come, you may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.' He was with them, and by his personal presence did give them a remedy upon any emergency. He was a screen to keep off the rage of men from them, by receiving it upon himself.

Fourthly, He searcheth into the causes of their sorrow: ver. 5, 6, 'But now I go my way to him that sent me, sorrow hath filled your hearts.'

(1.) His departure from them, ver. 6, that had filled their hearts with sorrow, the thoughts of that. And who could blame them for grieving at the parting with so good and tender a master, and to part with him when a deluge of misery by his own prediction was flowing in upon them, and to part with him upon such terms, and by such a death as to outward appearance would reflect on them as his followers, as well as on him their master? Such apprehensions of the storm could not but stagger an ungrown faith, and nip their budding hopes and joy. Probably their carnal conceptions of a carnal kingdom being foiled by our Saviour, was the ground of all. Alas! have we left all to follow him, and expected great outward advantages, and that we should be near him, and be his friends; and are we thus mistaken in his person and design, and fallen from the top of our hopes into the depth of an unexpected misery? Such conceptions they might have, and therefore their sorrows were the greater.

First, Observe, that spiritual apprehensions are an antidote against unbelief, and the sorrow consequent upon it. All such sorrow in a Christian

ariseth from ignorant, and false, and mean, and sordid, and unworthy notions of the design and the truths of God. Had these weak and heavy apostles had right and spiritual conceptions of their Master's work, they had rejoiced as much as now they grieved. None can live to Christ, as dying and rising for them, who have no other knowledge of him but 'after the flesh, 2 Cor. v. 15, 16. Carnal conceptions of the deeps of God do leave a very gloomy darkness upon the soul. Therefore he searcheth into the causes of their sorrow, the first of which was his departure.

Secondly, Their carelessness in inquiring whither he went; which he tells them of in a way of reproof: ver. 5, 'Now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you ask me, Whither goest thou?' Had they inquired of him the reason of things, their grief had been prevented, and their joy established. It was to heaven he was to go, upon their account as well as his own, to a Father that loved him, and them also.

1. Observe. Those things which are ground of joy in themselves are, by our neglect of a due inquiry, and our mistakes, matter of grief to us. How apt are good men to draw matter of sorrow from grounds of joy! The best man is a very ignorant interpreter of the designs of providence. We cannot see the beauty of providence, because of the black mask that veils it. For want of inquiring of Christ the end of his death and ascension, the reason of his going, and the place whither he went, they tasted not that comfort which this might have afforded them, and missed at present the design and intendment of it.

2. We may observe, that the way to true comfort is to inquire into, and consider well, the reason of divine mysteries. Had they understood the reason of his death, the reason of his ascension, the reason of his going to his Father, they could not have grieved, but rather have rejoiced. A slight knowledge will make but a slight grace, and flashy staggering joy: 2 Peter iii. 18, 'But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' Know how he is a Lord, and how he is a Saviour, and upon what accounts and grounds; and growing in such a kind of knowledge is the way to grow in grace.

Fifthly, He informs them of the necessity of his departure for their advantage. It was necessary for him to take possession of his kingdom, sit down upon his throne; necessary for them, that thereby they might enjoy the choicest fruits of his purchase: ver 7, 'It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.'

1. He illustrates this necessity by the contrary, 'If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you;' therefore, if you would have the Comforter come, it is necessary that I go.

2. He confirms it by an asseveration, 'I tell you the truth,' I speak truly to you, 'If I do not go, the Comforter will not come.' There is one to come after my departure to supply my absence, who shall carry on the work of redemption I have laid, with greater success to the conviction of the world, who shall be in your ministry with you, and shall convince men of their sins, and of that remedy I have provided.

We may observe,

First, How tender is our Saviour of grieving his weak and distressed people! He doth not rate them for their unbelieving sorrow, and forbear any further dealing with them; he might have chid them for not believing him upon his bare word, but he condescends to give them an affirmation, next to an oath, 'I tell you the truth.' He is always very careful not to break a bruised reed; and is like his Father, who by his oath hath given us strong consolation, and a mighty prop for our tottering faith.

Secondly, observe this, the death and ascension of Christ were highly necessary for the descent of the Spirit.

(1.) This choicest benefit we receive from God could not have come, unless the justice of God had been satisfied, and his favour procured by a sufficient sacrifice. How unreasonable is it to think God should bestow the highest of his favours, while his justice was not contented! Christ by his death appeased the anger of his Father, and bare the punishment we had merited, and opened those treasures of grace which by reason of our sins had been shut up from us. Besides, the death of Christ was so perfect an obedience, that it gained all the love and affection of his Father as a requital; it was so highly grateful to him, and the pleasure he took in it was so great, that because of that he would give to Christ and his people whatsoever was most dear and precious to him. To have this right of sending the Spirit, it was necessary Christ should die. The rock was to be struck by the rod of Moses before it did send out water; and Christ, the spiritual rock, was to be struck by the curse of the law before the Spirit (which is often in Scripture compared to water) could flow out. And though the Spirit was sparingly communicated before the death of Christ, yet it was communicated, and that upon the promise which Christ made of dying for men in the fulness of time, upon the account of that death which was to be suffered in due time.

(2.) The Spirit could not come unless Christ had ascended; for by his going to the Father, he means his death and ascension. The Spirit could not come but by the gift and mission of the mediator, on whose head he was first to be poured, and flow down from him on all believers. Besides, Christ received not those rich gifts from the hand of his Father, to communicate to us, till he had entered into the true sanctuary not made with hands. He received them for himself before, to fit him for that obedience he was to perform by the death of the cross; but he received them to communicate unto us after his ascension, then he received gifts for men. What he purchased by his death, he took possession of at his entrance into heaven. The end of the Spirit's coming could not be carried on without Christ's death and ascension; for the Spirit was to manifest the infiniteness of God's love to man, and declare the means of salvation. Now, the principal reason upon which this manifestation was to be built, was the death of Christ; he must therefore die, and rise again, and ascend, before the grounds of this reason could be valid; which appears afterwards in the reasons rendered of his 'reproving the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.' His death was necessary to satisfy God's justice; his resurrection and ascension to manifest God's acceptance and approbation of his death. The sending the Spirit being a part of his royalty as mediator, it was not convenient he should be sent till Christ was crowned, and sat down on his throne in his kingdom. There are two benefits by Christ: acquisition of redemption, which was by his death; and application of that redemption, which is by his intercession in heaven, and his Spirit on earth. So that if he had not ascended, we had wanted the Spirit to make application, and to render us fit for it; we had wanted the preparation for it, and the comfort of it. Then,

Thirdly, we may observe, that the presence of the Spirit is a greater comfort than simply the presence of Christ in his flesh. 'It is expedient for you that I go away; if I go not away, the Comforter will not come.' It is better for you I should go, because then the Comforter will come. Christ is a comforter; but the Spirit is more intimately a comforter than Christ in his fleshly presence. Christ in his first coming did possess himself of our flesh, and converse with his disciples outwardly; but the Spirit is to possess himself of our hearts inwardly: Gal. iv. 4-6, 'When the fulness of time

was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons; and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' Christ dwelt among us in the flesh; the Spirit doth not only dwell *with* a believer, but *in* him, John xiv. 17; not only dwell with you by outward declaration, but he shall be in you by inward motion and inspiration. And you see he giveth him here the title of Comforter. The name signifies one that speaks eloquently, persuasively, with much facility, elegancy, and affection, in such a manner as mightily works upon others, and pleasingly gratifies them. It signifies both a comforter and instructor, both which agree well to the Holy Ghost. For,

First, He was to acquaint the world with the highest mysteries of God manifest in the flesh; to open the secret of God's love to the world, and the resolves of eternity; to draw the curtain from before those truths which neither the eye of nature, nor the more open eye of the Jews were able to pierce into because of the veil, ver. 13. He was to 'guide them into all truth,' the knowledge and observance of all truth necessary.

Secondly, He was to witness of Christ; and therefore might well be called an instructor. As Christ unfolded the treasures of his Father's love, and purchased divine blessings by his passion, so the Spirit was to bear witness to the commission Christ had to offer up himself, and the validity of that offering, and the nature of his purchase. It was a thing incredible in itself, that a God of infinite tenderness should expose his innocent Son to sufferings and death for rebellious creatures. It was necessary the Spirit should be employed to persuade men inwardly of the reality and truth of this, of the authority of Christ, his sincerity in dying, and the efficacy of that death, and the necessity of their interest in it by faith, and to apply all to the believing soul with comfort, and fill it with peace by virtue of this expiation.

Now what is this Comforter, advocate, or instructor to do? He will reprove, or rather convince, ἐλέγξει; the word here translated *reprove* is sometimes so rendered: 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 'He is convinced of all.' It is the same word which is here, and also in Jude 15, 'To convince all that are ungodly of their ungodly deeds.' It signifies to reprove by way of argument, to manifest by an undeniable demonstration the truth or falsity of such an opinion, so as to stop the mouth of the guilty or erroneous person, that he cannot find so much as a fig-leaf of an excuse, or a starting-hole from it. It is to charge a thing so home and so close as to bring the conscience under the power of truth, and to make it self-condemned, to convict us by our own conscience; so the word is rendered in John viii. 9. So the Spirit was evidently to demonstrate the guilt of sin, and the beauty of righteousness, and the certainty of judgment.

To convince the world. The Spirit was not only given to the apostles, to set up light in their hearts, but to the world in a large sense, to justify Christ before them. Not only to those that shall be seriously affected under a sense of sin, and turn to Christ, but to convince others in the world of sin, who will never step any farther, nor yield to the power and authority of it, nor acknowledge the truth, nor accept of Christ and his righteousness.

What is the Spirit to convince of? Of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. A threefold object the Spirit was to be conversant about.

1. He was to convince of sin. The light of nature was not so extinct but some sins were to be discerned. All the most barbarous nations, agreeing in some common notion of justice and righteousness, they knew that many things they did were worthy of death by divine judgment; and they perceived

by sharp punishments inflicted on some notorious offenders in a particular manner, how odious some actions were to God, and how criminal before him. But,

First, The world understood not the extent of sin. They knew some sins, but not all the kinds of sin to which wrath is due; they looked upon some sins as part of their happiness, rather than their misery. What were clearly against the light of nature, crimson and scarlet sins, they could discern, and acknowledge themselves for them worthy of death; but there were some molehill sins, peccadilloes, against which they had no help, by consideration of the mercy of God, by laying hold of the righteousness of Christ, and the necessity of faith in him. They armed themselves with the mercy of God, without considering the righteousness of Christ. It opens not the malignity of sin, nor understands all the aggravations of it, which are necessary deeply to affect the soul.

Secondly, The world did not understand the sin of their nature. The world would not acknowledge it for unrighteousness, would not apprehend itself in a state of sin, because of their commendable qualities in the eyes of others. The world is not sensible of its change from the image of God by creation into the image of the devil by corruption. It understands not the extent of original sin, the depravation of their rational faculties, the lameness and impotency of their free will, nor the sinfulness of the first motions of their hearts; nature applauds its own power and self-ability in the midst of its weakness, and an affection to God under a boiling enmity.

Thirdly, The world did not understand the sin of unbelief. As the light of nature could not discover a Christ to them, so it could not discover the sin of unbelief to them; how could it convince of their unbelief, when it did not discover the object to be believed in. But the Spirit shall convince of a state of sin, of the depths of it in the heart, the streams of it in the life, and especially of unbelief, which renders the disease incurable, since there is no other medicine but the blood of Christ, and no other way of partaking of that medicine but by faith; it will evidence they are born in sin, can do nothing but sin, and cannot but by faith be delivered from those bonds of sin, but must die in them; that if they believe not in Christ, that came to redeem fallen mankind, their sins will lie on them, they will perish in them, and lie under the curse of God. Now that sin in general is here meant—the Spirit shall convince of sin—as the object of the Spirit's conviction, is clear, because,

First, He names it in general, as noting the whole mass of sin.

Secondly, Because it is in vain to convince men of the sinfulness of their unbelief, unless they be convinced first of the necessity of faith. And what ground have they to be convinced of the necessity of faith, unless they find such loads of sin upon them as they are never able to bear, such guilt as they are never able to answer for, or remove from themselves?

Thirdly, Because the Holy Ghost condemns all other sins, as well as unbelief, and therefore convinceth of them; not only of unbelief, but other sins that stand in the way of salvation.

Fourthly, The Spirit in the text was to pronounce the whole world out of Christ to be in a state of sin and death; because, when the world would plead its righteousness, and seem to establish trophies to itself, shield itself by its own righteousness, the Spirit should condemn that righteousness as not sufficient, because else it had been in vain for God to send his Son to work another righteousness. That is the first thing, the Spirit was to convince of sin.

II. The Spirit was to convince of righteousness.

1. Some refer it to the righteousness of Christ's person; that is, his going to the Father was an evidence that he was a just person; heaven would not else have entertained him; it would have been no receptacle for an impostor, and one that to his last gasp should persist in a known crime. The Spirit should convince the world by undeniable testimonies and demonstrations, that he was an innocent person, that he was no malefactor when he suffered.

2. Others refer it to the righteousness of Christ's office, and his merits imputed to believers. And, indeed, the coming of the Spirit was a testimony of his acceptation with the Father, for the Spirit had not come in such a miraculous manner as was manifest in the apostles, had not Christ in heaven had an acceptation of his sufferings from his Father.

3. Others understand it thus, He shall convince of the insufficiency of human righteousness. By the light of nature men had some particular notions of justice. By nature, they knew in some measure what was right; they knew they were not to do wrong, that they were to be advantageous to the community; they knew they were to cherish those that had been beneficial to them: hence they deified those that were public benefactors, either by the discovery of arts that were useful to human societies, or the defence of their country in an invasion, or the delivery of those that were oppressed, from the common plagues and scourges of mankind. These they boasted of, their moral virtues, their invented worship, the service of their gods, and their good intentions. Now, since by the light of nature men could not conceive of a higher righteousness than justice between man and man, and an external devotion towards God, the Spirit was to convince them of the weakness of this conceited righteousness, and the want of a better, shewing that Christ's righteousness is the only true righteousness of God, because he is gone to the Father, and shall not return again to be a sacrifice for sin. For if righteousness should have been by works, Christ had died in vain.

III. The Spirit was to convince of judgment. Some understand it that the judgment of this world concerning Christ was unjust; and the Spirit was to convince that it was so. Others, to convince of the damnation of the devil, and consequently of all that adhered to him: 'Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.' Others, of the deliverance of man, which was evidenced by the condemnation of the devil, subduing him upon the cross, taking away that sin whereby he had power over man. Others, of the judgment of the world concerning oracles, superstition, and the worship of idols, which they thought an acceptable worship. The Spirit should convince that this was a false judgment, since the devil was cast down from his chair of oracles, and the mouth of the father of lies was stopped, and the prince that usurped the government of the world, and to whom men paid ready obedience, was cast out and stripped of his power; also, *convince of judgment*, of the consequent of this righteousness and merit of Christ, and the certainty of God's judgment concerning him; because the devil is cast out, which is a sufficient evidence that God hath adjudged the victory to Christ, since the devil is dismounted of his power; and that perfection of holiness and freedom from sin shall be obtained at last, since the great captain of sin is slain, and there is no hopes of his rising again to secure his own standing, or destroy a believer's interest; for if the power of the Captain of their salvation did in his humiliation break the strength of the devil, much more in the state of exaltation will he keep him from ever reducing his people to that misery wherein they were before. And in this part of convincing, the Spirit did work as a comforter. Now, to 'convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment,' and to shew the further extent of

sin, and the necessity of another righteousness, required a mighty power; since these apprehensions which the world had, had reigned so long in them, and the new propositions and declarations were in themselves incredible to blear-eyed reason. Who could imagine that the Son of God should take flesh, and die upon the cross, and the devil be conquered and ruined by the death of the Son of God? Who could have imagined these things? Had the Son of God come in triumph into the world, with legions of angels, and visibly cast the devil from his throne, and visibly given forth his laws, then the world could not but have believed on him, and submitted to him: but to talk of a victory over a living devil by a dying man; of the necessity of believing in a crucified person, that suffered death as the vilest malefactor; to speak of the righteousness of God, wrought by one that was put to death as a criminal and a blasphemer, in the judgment of a whole nation, and his own countrymen too; these were such seeming contradictions to the weak reason of the world, without the divine light of the Spirit manifesting the reason, and divine methods, and the nature of the things which he was to instruct men in, as a comforter, as a teacher of the world, that they could not possibly take place in them by any less power than an almighty one.

One thing more: some think these convictions not to be by an inward illumination, but by an objective testimony of the Spirit, by miracles and extraordinary gifts conferred on the apostles, whereby the truth of what Christ had said and spoke was confirmed and demonstrated. Though this be true, yet it is not all: there was an objective conviction by miracles; but was not there also a secret inward conviction by inspiration? The Spirit was not only to dwell *among* men, or *with* them by outward acts, but *in* them, John xiv. 17. The Spirit was to be sent into the heart by an inward operation, as well as by an outward demonstration of miracles, and the Father and the Son promised to make their abode with the souls of believers, and manifest themselves to them: how, except in this manner? All the works of the Spirit are couched in this act of convincing of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. What is to be done here, but hating sin and encouraging our faith in Christ, because of his merit and his ascension to the Father, and heightening our hopes by the assurance of the conquest of sin and Satan? And all these are the acts of the Spirit in every believer, more or less, to the end of the world. The convincing of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, do in a manner comprehend all the acts of the Spirit in a believer. Therefore, it is more than an objective conviction. Thus much concerning the words. I shall pitch upon these two observations:

Obs. 1. That the Spirit of God is the author of conviction of sin. And,

Obs. 2. That unbelief (that being the reason rendered, 'of sin, because they believe not on me') is a sin of the greatest malignity against God, and danger to the soul. But for the

First, The Spirit is to convince of sin: not only in general, but in particular, of unbelief, consequently of the root whence it grows, the food that maintains it, and every sin that stops the entrance of the grace of faith. He was to shew the demerits of sin, whereby men might apprehend and be ascertained of the necessity of believing in the Mediator proposed, when they saw the depths of filthiness broken up, and the mountains of sin discovered, and not a mite of solid righteousness visible either in their natures or actions. The Spirit of God is the author of the conviction of sin. I shall shew,

First, That the Spirit doth convince of sin.

Secondly, It is necessary the Spirit should thoroughly convince of sin, if ever a man be convinced.

Thirdly, How and by what means the Spirit doth work this conviction.

Fourthly, What sin, or what in sin, he doth most convince of.

Fifthly, What the difference is between convictions proceeding from the Spirit more immediately, and those from any other cause.

Sixthly, The use.

I. That the Spirit doth convince of sin. We shall speak to it in some propositions.

First, All convictions of sin do, either mediately or immediately, come from the Spirit of God. As it is commonly said, whencesoever truth immediately cometh, it originally ariseth from the Holy Spirit; so, whatsoever the instrument be, the principal cause of the application of conviction is from the Spirit. There is a common and a special work of the Holy Ghost. All convictions of men, though they may some of them arise from some more immediate cause by the word, are the Spirit's work efficiently, by the word instrumentally. Conscience is naturally a dead and stupid thing, man a brutish creature, being fallen; and, being flesh, he resists and disputes against any convictions of sin; and therefore, if conscience be not stirred up by the Spirit, it would never rise up in any self-reflection: Gen. vi. 3, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for he is flesh.' As man, being flesh, is perverse against the reasonings of the Spirit, so, being flesh, he would never have the least distaste of any iniquity, unless the Spirit did excite those relics of natural light which remain in the soul. As those relics do remain in us by virtue of the mediation of Christ, so all the awakenings of them to any sense, or the reformations which have been wrought thereupon in the world, have been by the Spirit of Christ. All the sense that any of those of the old world had, was from the inward motion of the Spirit inviting them to repentance: 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man;' implying that it did strive, and it was in subserviency to Christ the Mediator that the Spirit did strive with that generation of men. Upon which account Christ is said by the Spirit to go and 'preach to the spirits in prison, which sometimes were disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah,' 1 Pet. iii. 20.

It was that Spirit of holiness and truth whereby Christ was quickened, which was no other than the Holy Ghost; and these disobedient persons to whom Christ preached thus by his Spirit, are called spirits, in relation to the state wherein they now are in prison, before the resurrection, not in relation to the state wherein they were when the Spirit did strive with them. Whatsoever sense there was upon any in the old world, was from the striving of the Spirit of God with them, as the Spirit of the Mediator, by whose interposition those relics which were in them were kept up, and that reason which they had was conveyed to them, and did remain in them. By this Spirit Christ is said to go and preach unto them. So that all motions of conscience, all convictions, whether upon those that reject them, or those that receive them, are from the Spirit as the Spirit of the Mediator. From this power did the terrors of Cain and Judas arise, so far as it was the work of illumination, exciting their rational faculties, though the sin and unbelief in those terrors did not arise from the Spirit. The stick stirs the water by the child's agitation, the mud is raised, though the stick doth not convey the mud to it, nor immediately touch it, but by the water. When the discovery of sin in its evil is made by the Spirit, that is a good work; but if men abstain from that sin, the evil of which they see, out of a servile principle, that is evil; the discovery and restraint is good, but the principle is evil, being the effect, not of any love to God, but enmity to him, and love to themselves. All the convictions of sin do either mediately or immediately come from the Spirit

of God in any person whatsoever, it is from his striving with them that they do arise.

Secondly, This is the office of the Spirit. The word *comforter*, *παράκλητος*, signifies an advocate, and is so translated when it is used of Christ: 1 John ii. 1, 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' Now, the office of an advocate is to convince the party he appears against of his crime, and the injury he hath done to his client; to answer his reason, and stop his mouth, and make the matter of fact evident. The convincing work of the Spirit is an advocacy to the soul; he appears and manageth the cause as an advocate; he arms himself with the curses of the law against it. He is an advocate for God and his righteousness in the law; but in the work of consolation the Spirit is an advocate for the soul, and the righteousness of the gospel, against the rigours of the law; so that, while the Spirit is an advocate against the soul, he must as necessarily accuse and argue against it, as when he is an advocate for the soul, he must refresh and pacify it, and plead for its support. In regard of this office he is called 'a spirit of bondage': Rom. viii. 15, 'Ye have not received the spirit of bondage,' &c.; which, though some would understand only of the outward Mosaic dispensation, it seems to be an inward work of the Spirit in the hearts of men. The intent of the apostle may be sometimes to shew the liberty of believers from the ceremonial law, to which the Jews were in bondage; but it doth not appear that it was the intent of the apostle in this place. Yea, it is to be considered that he wrote to the Christians in Rome, who were not all Jews, and very likely but a few of them were so, and so were never under the bondage of the Jewish ceremonies, but the burden of Pagan rites. As he is a 'Spirit of adoption,' exciting the soul to cry *Abba*, Father, he works orderly in the heart after faith; therefore, as he is a Spirit of bondage, he stirs up fears inwardly in the heart before faith. The apostle speaks in the former part of the chapter of the actings of the Spirit in believers, of the Spirit's dwelling in them; the necessity of a man's having the Spirit of Christ for 'mortifying the deeds of the body' through the Spirit, which respects men in particular in a state of faith; therefore what he means here is an inward work in the hearts of men, as well as the other operations of the Spirit, which he mentions both before and after it; so that the Spirit of bondage respects men in particular before a state of conversion; he is sent into the heart as a Spirit of bondage. Terrors, therefore, which are inward in the soul, and are called the Lord's terrors, Ps. lxxxviii. 15, 16, are here called the Spirit of bondage; not as if it bound the soul, but discovers those bonds which are by nature upon it, lays open the judgments of God against it, sets conscience at work to gall men for sin, and giveth not only a notional knowledge, but a sensible feeling of the weight of them. As he is called the 'Spirit of truth' and the 'Spirit of adoption,' because he applies the promises of grace, so he is called the 'Spirit of bondage,' as he gives a sight of those fetters that are clapped on by sin and Satan, and applies the law as a ministration of death, as that whereby the man is concluded or shut up under sin, and at present sees no way to escape. Now, the natural consequent and effect of this work must needs be fear. As the contagion of sin is discerned by the law, and the curses of the law, without the appearance of the evangelical remedy, there must needs be pangs and terrors. The law shews only the guilt, but not the pardon; opens the command and threatening, but whispers not a syllable of comfort without perfect obedience. In the application of the threatenings, he is a Spirit of bondage; in the application of the promises, he is a Spirit of adoption. As he flashes fire in the face of a sinner, so he strews comforts in the heart of a believer.

Thirdly, The Spirit is the infuser of all grace in the heart, and therefore is the author of all preparations to grace, or anything that hath any tendency that way. It is by the Spirit of grace any are made sensible of their piercing Christ, Zech. xii. 10, and brought to mourn over him. The same Spirit that springs up their mournful tears, fixeth their believing eye, both upon their sin, and on the person they had abused by it: 'The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost,' Rom. v. 5, as he manifests the love of God to us, or raiseth up our love to God; which cannot be without loathing sin, and a sense of it in the heart and life, to enable the soul to hate it. The true sense of God's goodness cannot be without the sense of our naughtiness. When the Spirit doth both these, it is a Spirit of adoption; when it works only a sense of sin, it is a Spirit of bondage. As all righteousness and truth are works of the Spirit, so all works that are antecedaneous to, and necessary for, the attaining and preserving true righteousness, are the fruits of the Spirit, among which deep convictions are none of the least. It is by the Spirit that we see, as well as crucify, the lusts of the flesh.

Fourthly, The Spirit of God is promised in the times of the gospel, for such operations as this of conviction, as 'a Spirit of judgment,' and 'a Spirit of burning:' 'When the Lord shall wash away the filth of the daughter of Zion, and purge the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning,' Isa. iv. 4. A spirit of judgment to convince them, a spirit of burning to refine them, and consume their greater and lesser iniquities. He cites the soul before a tribunal, before he baptizes it with fire to refine it; and that this is to be understood of gospel times, will appear from the 2d verse, 'In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious'; and this is part of that excellent fruit that shall be in the earth. In regard of this the Spirit is called fire, to scorch in conviction and self-condemnation by its heat, as well as to comfort by its light and warmth: Isa. xl. 7, 'The grass withereth, and the flower fadeth, because of the Spirit of the Lord that bloweth upon it.' Our carnal confidences stand firm until he hews them down; our righteousness is amiable until the Spirit blows upon it, and dissolves its paint; beautiful, until the Spirit snatches off the disguise. This is a gospel promise, that flesh should appear what it is. It should be made desolate, and convictions be wrought in men of the ugliness of sin, and the emptiness of their own righteousness, and the insufficiency of everything that comes under the title of flesh. This is a gospel promise of what the Spirit should do when the glory of the Lord should be revealed. Flesh should appear to be what it is, a manifest conviction be wrought of the ugliness of sin, the emptiness of our own righteousness, the insufficiency of everything that cometh under the title of flesh. The

II. Second thing is to shew, that it is necessary the Spirit should do this work of convincing. There is as much need of the Spirit to convince us of the guilt of sin, while we are in a state of nature, as there is of the Spirit to comfort us under the apprehensions of guilt, and the charge of an accusing conscience. There is as much need of the Spirit to do the one as to do the other. For,

1. The light of fallen nature is insufficient of itself to cause a thorough conviction. It is true, there is a natural law in men's hearts, which discovers some duties to be done, some gross impieties to be avoided. There are common notions left in man which may conduct him in a moral course, without which human society could not be preserved. These are, that there is a God, that this God is to be worshipped, that he is righteous, who re-

wards those that seek him, that there are evil actions worthy of death, that there is a judgment to be inflicted upon the commission of sin, a self-satisfaction and peace in the avoiding of it, and performing such things as are good, and comely, and honest, and of good report; and from such principles as these, common in man, those laws in all nations against enormities, which are praiseworthy, and are the bands and ligaments of society and of government, did arise. Now, these habitual principles in the mind, if read over, will judge and censure some acts of unrighteousness: some 'works of the flesh are manifest, such as these, adultery, fornication,' &c., Gal. v. 19, clear by natural light to be the works of the flesh. Conscience must more or less naturally set in order before a man's eyes some sort of unrighteousness, such unrighteous actions which are contrary to those implanted notions, and plainly tell them, without any other proof than what is in them, that 'they that do such things are worthy of death,' Rom. i. 32; because they are against the universal law imprinted in human nature, and against the acknowledged principles placed in us by God. For the knowledge of righteousness and sin, and also of God's piercing eye, whereby he seeth all sin, and of his impartial justice, which hath store of punishments for the violaters of his law, is almost as deeply imprinted upon the mind of man by nature as the notion of a God; for, indeed, they do naturally flow from the notion of a supreme cause, the governor of the world. Wherefore, in many cases, God appeals to men's reason, and the principles that are left in them, Isa. v. 3, Ezek. xviii. 25, and is willing to stand to the unbiassed judgment of their own minds. But natural light discovers not sin so fully as it is necessary for a man to be convinced of it, in order to the entertainment of Christ, and the grace of God in and by him. For natural light,

First, Discovers not the root of sin. But there is a necessity a man should be convinced of the root of sin. Men do not by nature understand the universal pollution of their nature, nor feel the heaviness of the sin of Adam. It shews us that something is amiss, and much amiss, but whence this disorder doth arise nature of itself is wholly ignorant, hath not so much as a regular guess, without revelation. The light of nature is too dim to pierce into the depths of evil; it acquaints not with the *fomes* of sin, and that inward strength of evil that gave birth and nourishment to those uncouth actions; some actual evils it discerns to be so, but not the depraved principle of them. Some actual evils are loathsome to men by nature, but not the principle of them; men are not sensible what possession the evil spirit of Adam hath of their souls. There must be, therefore, some other light to pierce through the clouds of nature, and search into the depths of the belly, and bring to view that habitual inconformity of our nature, to that rectitude required of us, and once possessed by us.

Secondly, It discovers not sin as the greatest evil in the world, neither did ever nature hate sin as such, because nature is not endowed with any spiritual affections by its natural descent. It never had a due sense either of the authority or holiness of the lawgiver, nor ever considered sin as a contempt of the sovereignty and purity of the lawgiver and his law, wherein, indeed, the intrinsic evil of sin doth consist, James ii. 10, 11. Nature did excite some fears upon the guilt of sin, but no grief for the filth of sin. Men by nature respect sin as it stands in relation to the justice and omniscience of God, as it is the object of his sight and knowledge, and the object of his revenging justice and wrath, but not as it stands in contrariety to the purity of God. As it is an afflictive evil they may regard it, but not as it is a polluting evil; as staining their reputation, not as defiling their souls. Nature giveth us but a little prospect of the beauty of God's holiness, whereby we

must measure the heinousness, malignity, and odiousness of sin. As from the weakness of the relics of natural light there are no strong and powerful motions to God, because, though nature discovers something of God, yet not in all his perfections, and the amiableness of his nature; so the convictions of sin are weak, because there is not by that light a discovery of the abominableness of it to God, and the intrinsic pollution, which is as essential to sin as guilt. Neither, indeed, doth nature discover the consequents of sin in their dreadfulnes, and that wrath which will at last meet with it, and overflow the sinner. The mind, therefore, must be enlightened by some higher power to understand the holiness of God, thereby to conceive the impurity of sin.

Thirdly, Nature discovers not the extent of sin in the invisible and secret veins of it. Many branches of sin are invisible to nature; it doth not discover sin in its latitude. Nature acquaints not with all the duties to be done, nor the manner how to do them; therefore, tells not of all the sins we are to shun, nor the manner how to avoid them. It utters not a syllable of Christ the mediator, in whose name we are to perform our duties, nor of the sanctifying Spirit, in whose strength we are to perform them; nor of faith, through which principle we are to do them; nor of the glory of God in all the ways of it, for which end we are to do them; nor of the evangelical promises, from which we are to take encouragement for the doing of them; and, consequently, doth not shew the extent of sin, which consists in the failing in all these. It did, indeed, dictate since the fall that God was to be worshipped, and that with the best strength of the creature, but not the manner and way of that worship, and therefore informs not of sins committed against the true worship of God. It discovers not the sinfulness of the first motions, and of the inward workings of lust. The Jews, that had the improvements of nature by the discoveries of the law, knew not the first inward motions, when stifled, to be sin. They needed, though not the correction of the law, yet the interpretation of our Saviour in his sermon on the mount. What sins nature did make a discovery of, it did only manifest in some pieces and parts, not in the whole scope of them. As the light of nature did not shew the law of God in its wideness, so neither sin in its foulness. It is necessary, therefore, that there should be some higher power to discover those sins that are beyond the ken of natural light. By the light of the sun we see the atoms and motes, that we can never discern by the light of the stars.

Fourthly, Nature discovers not unbelief, the greatest sin of all. Nature doth not convince of unbelief; what sight of it can nature direct us to? The works of creation evidence not the mystery of redemption, so the light of creation doth not evidence the sins against that mystery. The light of nature discovers a Creator, but not a Redeemer; because, though God made the world in order to that glory he intended to get by redemption, yet he made not the world as a Redeemer. And though it was made by that person who was the Redeemer, yet it was not made in the way of redemption, nor with the manifestation of those attributes of love, wisdom, and righteousness, which were evident in the work of redemption.

A toad, upon the view of its image in a glass, knows not its own deformity, nor the excellency of a man, or some other creature superior to it, and therefore knows not how to measure its own deformity; nor doth a natural man, with his depraved reason, know himself by the glass of the word to be of a viperous brood, without some common work of the Spirit. Men by nature are not ashamed of sin as sin: Rom. vi. 21, 'What fruit had ye then in

those things, whereof ye are now ashamed?' *Now* ashamed, intimating that in the state of nature they were not ashamed. They were now ashamed under the new light whereby they saw them in their nature, not before, under their natural darkness, wherewith their eyes were closed. Nature never discovers its own deformity. That is the first thing; the light of nature is insufficient to discover or convince thoroughly of sin. Nature is insufficient for this work.

(2.) The law barely of itself doth not convince thoroughly of all sin. It discovers, indeed, more clearly some sins than the light of nature, in regard it doth more evidence the sovereign authority and holy nature of God, and consequently discovers the nature of guilt and the greatness of the filth of sin, and brings to view upon an examination of the heart those little sprouts and branches of sin in the first motion which are not visible by star-light; yet this discovers not the main condemning sin, it discovers not the work of redemption by Christ. It commands faith in what God reveals, but not faith with such a modification, directed to such an object as a dying Redeemer. The voice of the law is not, 'He that believeth shall be saved,' but 'Do this and live.' The knowledge of other sins is by the law, but the knowledge of unbelief by the gospel. Yet this doth not convince us of all actual sins of itself, not in regard of the inability of it as a rule, or want of perfection in its prohibition of sin, but in regard, not only of the multitude of our sins and infirmities, but the weakness of our nature. Whence David, Ps. xix. 12, cries out of secret sins, 'Who can understand the errors of his life? Lord, cleanse me from my secret faults.' He rightly imagined there were more sins in him than fell under his discovery by that light. These properties of the law can never be exercised but in the hand of God, as it is an instrument of his managing and directing. How few souls, among those multitudes of the Israelites, were rightly and thoroughly convinced by the thunderings at mount Sinai, at the first publishing of the law! The word is a sword, yet the sword of the Spirit, and can no more make gashes in the conscience without the Spirit to wield it, than a sword can pierce and cut without a strong arm to add force to its edge. God himself appearing to a man by his bare word to his ear, without exerting a power on his heart, cometh short of attaining to this end. It was not presently that Adam came to a downright acknowledgment of his sin, though charged with it by God in the garden. Nor did Cain come to a kindly conviction and confession of his sin, after all God's disputes with him about his sin, and manifestations of his patience in making a hedge of his providence round about him. So that the law, as it doth not discover all sin, sins which are immediately against the gospel, so it is unable of itself to convince without some powerful hand, the power of the Spirit of God, to manage it. The reason of this insufficiency is,

First, The wrong notion of things, and the blindness of mind, in natural men under the gospel. It is a notion that will not enter into the hearts of men naturally, that sin is so odious and abominable to God. Many things they count very light, and prop up themselves with a hope of mercy, and it will not enter into their heart (it is so deeply inlaid in their natures), that there is need of the death of the Son of God to take away the guilt of sin, and the power of the Spirit to wash away the filth of it. They are not ready to believe this, unless the arm of the Lord pull up such notions, and root others in them. Hence Isaiah cries out, 'Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?' Who hath believed that ever sin is attended with that guilt that the Messiah must be smitten of God,

stricken and afflicted, to repair the breaches sin hath made? We have false opinions of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, and therefore the Spirit doth confute an opinion (as the word *ἐλέγχειν* signifies) which had been settled in the soul; it shews us sins we never dreamt of, a righteousness we never imagined, and a new fountain of holiness. Rom. i. 21, 'When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, and became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.' Man believes he is as God created him; he is ignorant of the corruption of his blood, believes himself holy in his unholiness, righteous in his unrighteousness. Vice is hid in the soul, worse than any outward disease in the body. Men easily find their bodies ill-affected, but understand not the state of their souls possessed by sin, because the understanding, which should judge of the disease, is ill-affected itself. The foolish heart of man is darkened, and being darkened cannot understand the disease, because that is the power of judging, and that being corrupted, cannot judge in the things it suffers. This makes soul-diseases naturally incurable, causeth men to refuse the medicines, shun all means of recovery, and be angry with them that apply remedies. Men may converse with the law, understand the letter of it, while they are ignorant of the intent; a man may see a glass without a reflection on himself. Paul, a pharisee, was a student in the law, a doctor fit to teach the letter of the law, yet there was a veil between him and the spirit of it, until the Spirit held the law close to his conscience, Rom. vii. 9. We may have the outward letter and outward work too, when yet the brightness of it, by reason of the thick mist on the mind, reacheth not the remote part of the soul. Bring a man that hath lost sight and smell into a nasty filthy place, he knoweth not but that it is a beautiful garden, until his eyes be opened and his smell restored. Therefore there is a necessity of the Spirit to enlighten the mind in this first work as well as in all consequential acts. A necessity of the Spirit to enlighten our minds, who, in regard of his omniscience, is able by the light of the word to bring sins to view, out of their skulks and hiding-places. How great is this ignorance of themselves in the best! We know but in part, and as 'in a glass darkly,' either God or ourselves. And as we stand in need of an high priest to pity us under our infirmities, so of the Spirit to discover them to us, that we may have a spiritual discerning of a spiritual mischief. For as there is a common natural and a spiritual knowledge of God, so there is a natural and a spiritual knowledge of sin: natural when men know such a thing to be sin, but spiritual when they understand the spiritual filth, and pollution, and mischief of sin. There is need of the Spirit that we may spiritually discern the spiritual mischief, that we may know spiritual truths in a spiritual manner, that we may know sins also with a spiritual eye. Since the darkness of the mind is the cause of a vain walking, Eph. iv. 17, 18, that can never be in any sort a remedy, which is the cause of the disease, therefore the wrong notions of men make them incapable of working this conviction upon themselves by the law.

Secondly, Another reason is, a natural enmity to any such discovery, which is universal in all men. There is nothing men more naturally abhor than any thing tending to the rooting out those vicious habits they are deeply in love withal. As men, when they know God, have no mind to glorify him as God, so men, when they cannot avoid the knowledge of the threatenings of God, have no mind to believe them and consider them as the threatenings of God. Convincing arguments always meet with contradiction from nature. It is for this very reason men hate the light, lest their deeds should be reprov'd, their deeds they be convinc'd of: John iii. 20, 'Every one that doth evil hates the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds

should be reproved ;' which light they would love well enough were it not attended with so displeasing an effect. Our Saviour pronounceth it universally of all mankind, 'Every one that doth evil hates the light ;' and who by nature can pretend an exemption ? Not a man by nature but abhors more to have a conviction of sin, than the best believer abhors those deeds he is convinced of ; and this makes the conviction utterly impossible by the mere strength of nature. Hence we are compared to wild asses, that snuff up the wind, endure hunger and thirst, undergo any inconvenience, rather than be convinced of a miserable state, and submit to be reduced to a better. Hence where do you find a man that yields to the first arguments brought against his lusts, but struggles and strives against such conviction ? Nay, do they not cherish their beloved sins under rebukes, draw a curtain between themselves and the law, and will see no faults in what they affect ? What an irrational folly did possess the pharisees, who, because Christ by raising Lazarus had got a name and a greater number of disciples, would have killed Christ and him, as though that power that raised Lazarus, after he had been dead three days, could not have preserved him from them, or, if they had killed him, could not have raised him again, and restored life to him as often as they had stripped him of it, or turned them into their graves ! So hard is it to convince men of sin, yea, and of common and rational truths, against the overpowering love of their passions and interests. There is need then of some superior power to set the light before men, and fix their eyes upon it ; for naturally men reject all impressions which come upon them from any declaration of truth, and are no more friends to it than darkness is in league with light, and cannot from themselves have any due reverence to the word on the account of the authority of it, and the holiness of God the author of it, but endeavour to extinguish it as soon as ever they see any sparks of it in their hearts.

Thirdly, The weakness and falseness of natural conscience is another thing that proves nature's insufficiency to such a work.

(1.) The weakness of it. Conscience, indeed, hath a natural power of judgment, but not higher than the light in it. A clear light is necessary to a right judgment ; and when there is a light in it, yet itself being dull and sleepy, must be roused up to perform its office. As original corruption hath darkened the mind and enfeebled the will, so it hath darkened this faculty (for there is no room in the house that is privileged from infection), and the greater the strength of sin, the weaker is the sense of it ; for the defilement increaseth the insensibility, Eph. iv. 19, which is the state of men by nature, it being the state of all the Gentiles. The fuller of dead works, the more listless must it be in its office ; for the strength of sin puts the conscience under a restraint, and makes that a prisoner to it, which should be a spy and monitor against it ; 'who hold the truth in unrighteousness.' There is an imprisonment of truth, and though conscience doth sometimes reflect the light of the law upon the soul, yet because of its weakness it is as unable to fire the soul as a small spark is to inflame a reeking dunghill, or a burning-glass to fire anything when the sun is masked with thick clouds and fogs. Sometimes conscience makes false determinations and reflections for want of knowledge ; sometimes no reflections by reason of stupefaction by sin, which is the effect of every sin, till it be roused by the voice of God. Perhaps Adam's conscience might be put almost into as deep a sleep by sin as his body had been by his Creator when he took Eve out of it ; for though he was sensible after his fall of his being stripped of his righteousness, yet he doth not seem to be convinced of his sin till God had spoke, which awakened his conscience. Just after by his sin he fell from so great and so happy an estate, the Scripture

giveth no remark of any affrightment he had till he heard the voice of God. Prisoners are jolly in the gaol till they hear of the coming of the judge, though they know the crimes they are guilty of. In some, conscience is so sleepy, or rather dead, that it may be said of them, as of those, Acts xix. 2, who when they were asked 'whether they had received the Holy Ghost,' they 'had not heard of such a thing as the Holy Ghost:' so these have not heard of such a thing as conscience.

(2.) The falseness of conscience, and its easiness to be deceived, shews the unlikelihood of nature's ever convincing. An 'evil conscience,' being opposed to a 'true heart,' by the apostle, Heb. x. 22, is a false conscience. The falseness of conscience lies in not pressing what it knows. Every man by nature hath the same general and natural notions which a renewed man hath; but conscience makes not the soul sensible of what it knows, by urging things, and bringing them to a particular application, and drawing them out in rank and file. Though it hath a commission as God's deputy, yet it neglects its charge, is bribed, and overawed, like an officer in a town, who neglects the trust reposed in him by the governor. It is apt to be deceived by outward performances, which doth incapacitate it to convince men thoroughly; it is apt to have its mouth stopped by the husk of a duty instead of a kernel; it troubles rather for gross sins than for spiritual ones; nay, it doth not ordinarily rebuke for any spiritual sin; leaves off reproving, and rather applauds men when they engage in outward performances; saith, 'Well done, good and faithful servant;' it is usually contented with the outward performance, though there be more of self in it than of aim at God's glory; with the work of the law, though there be not the power of the law written in the heart. If it hath any voice at all, it is not loud, but faint, like that of Eli to his sons, Do no more so; and it is apt to speak peace when there is no ground of peace. This is universally the disease of conscience in natural men. It conspires with the other faculties, not to be injurious to the carnal interest in the soul. There must therefore be, on the account of its falseness and weakness, some higher power to rouse a sleepy conscience, rectify a depraved conscience. Unless the eye be more piercing, the judgment more sound, conviction can have no progress. Until the bullet be shot by the Spirit, it will fall short of the mark.

Fourthly, A fourth reason which shews the insufficiency of nature to such an end is the false disguises of sin, and the pretences for it, which make the universal conviction of it impossible to nature. Besides those notions of sin which naturally are in men's own minds, they are swayed much by the common sentiments of others concerning this or that practice; and when any vice is esteemed a virtue, it is above the power of nature to affect the heart with that which is commonly applauded as a matter of praise. The sinfulness of actions which are attended with profit and honour is not easily perceived; the whole bent of nature stands in defence of them, interest, profit, and credit; whatsoever is dear to men, they are mighty champions for it. Covetous, and ambitious, and proud men, and whosoever are guilty of those sins that stream from these fountains, do not easily acknowledge their crimes, because they lie hid in the heart, they continually besiege the mind, fill up all corners of the soul, that true reason hath not room to lift up its hand. Those that are given to sensual pleasures and intemperance appear more easily to acknowledge their sins in the intervals of lust, because these are more brutish; but as for others their sins are more refined, accounted necessary and generous; they have cloaks and covers for them of frugality, fortitude, &c. Whence it appears men are more easily brought to a sense of, and turning from, brutish vices than from internal ones, those which spring

up from a root more fast settled in the heart, those vices which bring in honour, profit, and esteem, such being more dear to men than those of pleasure, which may be laid aside, and men being at great pains in undertaking to nourish their ambition. In some things, men have an imagination they act generously and bravely, even in their vices, which renders them more inflexible to any reflections of conscience, and shews a necessity of some higher power to take off the mask of sin, and discover it without its disguise.

Fifthly, The subtle evasions of carnal reason render the universal conviction of sin impossible to mere nature. What glosses will a winding wit put upon sin, present evil as good, and good as evil! Ever since man drew in the serpent's breath, he hath imitated the tempter in this his masterpiece of false representations. Excuses for sin are equally derived with the sin of our nature from our first parents in their first sin. Adam and Eve did not deny their crimes, but cast the blame from themselves, Adam upon Eve, Eve upon the serpent. And Adam wraps God himself up in the society of his crime, charging it on that snare that his wife was to him. Thus great sinners imagine themselves innocent, when they can excuse their sin by the inducement of others, and the constitution of their bodies, as if anything could force the will; they will have subtle distinctions for the extenuating of their sin, though their spots appear in all their garments, and may be seen without searching for. Men will not many times believe themselves sinners, by reason of the subtle distinctions that a corrupt wit will find out, though their blackness be as visible as that of a negro, and argue against strong rebukes as much as a troubled conscience will against grounds of comfort. Men naturally stand upon a sense of honour, are loath to condemn themselves under apparent crimes, and for fear of punishment will rather reflect upon God, and by distinctions blunt the edge of his word. And there are other corrupt reasonings, by promises of future repentance, hopes of mercy, entitling presumptuous sins infirmities, and such as all men by nature are incident to, whereby they nonplus conscience and delude their souls; and though they confess sin in the general, yet they suspend as to a particular confession. Till this self-love be discovered and overawed by the Spirit, little good is to be expected. There is therefore need of the Spirit, ἐλέγχειν, to confute these calumnies and stop men's mouths, and bring down the contrivers and inventers of them to lick the dust. God only, who is omniscient, and knows all the wards of the heart, can search the secret parts of it, and bring sin to light, and the soul to spiritual reason.

Sixthly, The natural levity and inconstancy of the soul, renders it impossible to nature to convince. It is from this instability, those wrestings of Scripture, and evasions to turn away the dint of a rebuking argument, do arise: 2 Peter iii. 16, 'Which they that are unstable and unlearned, wrest to their own destruction.' They are naturally like clouds which have no certain basis, therefore as soon can a natural cloud fix as they. Hence, men's convictions are like fits of an ague, which have their intervals, and at last wear quite away. Man can have no composedness nor consistency in himself, while he is hurried about by various ends and objects, while in a state of nature. All the power of nature can no more make an impression on such fluid persons, than a man can draw a picture upon the water, or plough the rivers, and make them receive seed and bring forth fruit. Instability scatters and divides the powers of the soul, that they cannot unite in any serious reflections. So that you see nature is utterly insufficient, and there is a necessity of some higher power than nature to convince the soul of sin. I shall add a,

(3.) Third argument. As neither nature nor law can do it upon those

accounts, and therefore there is a necessity of the Spirit for this purpose ; so it is necessary that this thorough conviction which ends in conversion, should be the work of the Spirit, in regard of the honour of God, that the whole new state, with all its antecedents, as well as consequents, may be of God ; that the hewing the stone, as well as setting it in the building, the preparations of the members, as well as uniting them to the head, may owe itself only to the divine power, that all cause of glorying in ourselves may be cut off, according to the intent of the gospel. If a man should convince himself, and make himself sensible of sin, though afterwards he should be brought to a through conversion and close with Christ, yet the glory of the first sense and preparation will be the glory of the flesh ; but all flesh, in everything which concerns our recovery, must be silent before God. As the Spirit doth all things about the head Christ, so he doth all things about those he intends his members. As Christ was led by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil, that he might have a sense of sin, and be acquainted with the craft and subtilty of that adversary, which had brought all the dishonour upon God, and sunk all mankind in misery ; so the Spirit doth convince his members of sin, suits the word providentially to make impressions, worketh and preserves these impressions in them, that the whole work, the ploughing up the fallow ground of the heart, as well as the sowing the seed in it, may redound to the glory of God in the entire praise of it.

So that, you see, it is necessary the Spirit should convince of sin. Nature cannot do it, cannot convince of the root of sin, and it cannot convince of the evil of sin, and it cannot convince of the latitude of sin, nor of unbelief. And the law, that cannot convince of unbelief, nor indeed of any sin, without the Spirit's management of it, it being the sword of the Spirit. The reason of the insufficiency of nature, which is, the wrong notions of things, the blindness of mind under the gospel, and a natural enmity universally in every man that doth evil against any such discovery, the weakness and falseness of natural conscience, and the false disguises of sin, pretences for it ; all which render universal convictions impossible ; and so doth the levity and unstedfastness of the soul ; beside the necessity of it for the honour of God.

III. The third question is, How doth the Spirit work these convictions ? And before I speak to that, take only this caution. Though the Spirit doth work these convictions in the hearts of men, and it is necessary he should, yet slavish fears, desperation, and other sinful things consequent upon the knowledge of ourselves, are not the work of the Spirit, and therefore do not flow from him by any immediate impression of his upon the soul ; but they are the consequent of this sight and sense men have of the dreadfulness of their state, which the Spirit shews them, by fixing their eye on the glass of the law, and their thoughts upon their miserable condition. As when a wild beast is tied to a post, or shut in a den, the hand that fastens or shuts him in is not the cause of his snarling, and tossing, and beating himself against the wall ; this is a consequent of his own wild disposition, as being in such a state ; or, as the wrath of God, which kindles hell, and locks and scorches the damned in the perpetual prison, this as punishment and a physical evil belongs to God, and is his proper act, but not those blasphemies and curses which rise from the pain of the damned. If men in afflictions, which may be remedied, do curse God, Isa. viii. 21, much more will it be consequent upon an endless misery, where there is no hope of redress. It is impossible that a man under punishment, without the hopes of a pardon, and being wholly corrupt, should have good thoughts of a revenging God. Yet though

God *inflict what is just*, he doth not *excite what is evil* and unjust. So, though the Spirit makes impressions upon men, discovers the misery of their state, sets their sins in order before them, by the awakening of conscience, and by his motion fixeth their minds on the consideration of them ; yet those sinful fears, accusations of God, charges against God, are not the effect of the Spirit in them, but the bubbling up of their own hearts naturally incident unto that state they are apprehensive of. And now to proceed unto that

Third question. How doth the Spirit work this conviction ? The great instrument whereby the work is wrought, is the law ; he acts in such a method in conviction as a Spirit of bondage, as he doth in assurance as a Spirit of adoption. As he is a Spirit of adoption, the gospel is the instrument whereby he works assurance ; as he is a Spirit of bondage, the law is the instrument, which is in a way of syllogism. When he comforts, it is in this manner : ' He that believeth shall be saved ; ' but the soul assumeth, But I believe, therefore I shall be saved. So it is in this of conviction, ' Every one that believeth not, shall perish ; ' the soul assumeth, But I believe not, therefore I shall perish. Every one that is unholy shall not see God ; I am unholy, saith the soul, therefore I shall not see God. The first proposition is the evidence of Scripture, the second is the evidence of conscience, the third is the evidence of reason in a rational deduction. It is as a solemn court of judicature : the first proposition consists of matter of law, He that believeth not shall perish, the assertion of God ; and, He that is unholy shall not see God ; this is matter of law, the assertion of God. The evidence as to matter of fact, is given in the second proposition, But I believe not, but I am unholy. The sentence is pronounced in the third, Therefore I shall perish, therefore I shall never see God. In the first, the soul is arraigned ; in the second, tried and cast ; in the third, condemned. The instruments then which the Spirit useth in convincing, are,

First, The law, which is the rule whereby to judge of the moral good or evil of actions ; and conviction is nothing else but the formal impression of sin by the law on the conscience, or the reviving that which was before imprinted ; the blowing off the dust from the letters of the law written in the soul. The

Second instrument the Spirit useth is the conscience, in the conviction of the fact. This tells the soul of its breaking the law, and contempt of the lawgiver ; flies in the face with a Thou art the man, and affects him as if the law had pronounced him by name accursed ; upon which account conscience is called a witness, Rom. ii. 15. And when this cometh and gives full evidence, the mouth is stopped, Rom. iii. 19, and the soul is said to die, Rom. vii. 9, is no more able to answer the accusations of the law, when applied by conscience, than a man deprived of life is able to answer a word at the bar, but remains as dead in law, under a sense of guilt. To assist conscience in this work, is the greatest work the Spirit hath to do, which otherwise would be silenced by men's iusts, or bribed to give in a false, weak, or slight witness, *ignoramus*, or mince the matter. As in the syllogism, whereby we come to assurance, it is the hardest matter to frame the second proposition, But I believe, but I love God ; the hardest matter to find out the truth of grace ; so it is the hardest matter in this way of conviction to find out sin, to be sensible of the guilt of sin. As many Christians do not own and find the truth of grace, by reason of their fears, and doubts, and darkness, so many a sinner will not own his sin, by reason of his self-love. Therefore the Spirit doth first work by the law, this is the breath of his lips, wherewith he slays the wicked, Isa. xi. 4, which hath a greater force in the hand of the Spirit, than the eloquence of the mightiest orator, and

makes men fall down under the power of it. As conversion is a knitting the heart and the gospel together, so conviction is a knitting the heart and the law. As the Spirit dwells in sons in a way of comfort, to make them call God Abba, Father; so he is in sinners, in a way of conviction, to make them regard God as a judge. As by the word men are forewarned from sin, so by the word men are reprov'd for sin. This is the Spirit's instrument, for God doth not in an ordinary way act immediately, but useth instruments in all his works; not that we say that the law is the cause of salvation (that is only by the gospel),—it is no more the cause of it, than the lancing of a wound, letting out the putrefied matter, is the cause of the cure,—but it discovers the depth of the wound, and that corrupt matter which, residing there, would hinder the cure, and fester, and end in putrefaction; or, as one saith, it is but as a fisherman beating the river, or troubling the water to drive the fish into the net. The Lord drives men into the net of the gospel, whereby they are caught for God. There are three acts of the law, justifying, directing, and convincing; the justifying act of the law is out of doors, and a condemning act stepped into the room, since men are 'concluded under sin,' Gal. iii. 21–23. Man in his first creation stood in an indifferency to the promises and comminations of the law, according as his carriage should be, but when sin came, the promise of the law was of no force, because the condition of obedience was not performed, whereupon man lay under the power of the curse. The directing power of the law remains, as a rule to guide us; for the work of Christ was to reduce us to obedience. The convincing power of it is of perpetual use, for the discovery of the depth of sin in the heart: Ps. xix. 12, 'Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from my secret faults.' Of perpetual use even to believers too, in regard of the contest with spiritual sins, even for the discovery of spiritual sins. There is a spiritual use of a spiritual law, to manifest those sins to a believer; in which respect it is not a terror to a believer, but a delight, because it discovers the enemies of God in the soul, and makes it run to the fountain of Christ's blood in the gospel for the cleansing of them; so that the more this revealing power of the law is used, the more occasion hath faith to manifest itself in recourse to the gospel promise. In these two latter respects the law is of constant and necessary use: the convictive is necessary to affect us with sin, and the insufficiency of our own righteousness; and the directive is not destroyed, but enforced by the gospel. We must know ourselves, and know God; the law giveth us a knowledge of God in his authority and holiness, and a knowledge of ourselves in our subordination and vileness. And,

First, The Spirit discovers sin by the law. It is the end of all laws to inform the understanding of what is to be done, and consequently of men's deviation from them: and so absolutely necessary the law is for this discovery, that the apostle owns all his knowledge of sin to come from thence: Rom. vii. 7, 'I had not known sin but by the law;' by this sin is revived: Rom. vii. 9, 'When the commandment came, sin revived;' as the moisture in wood is excited by the fire, wheezing out at the end, which was not discerned before. The rectitude of the rule discovers the crookedness of our nature; the perfection of the law, the degenerateness of the soul; the purity of the law, the pollution of the heart; the spirituality of the law, the carnality of our minds. The rule being altogether excellent, discovers a man altogether vile: Gal. iii. 19, 'The law was added because of transgression;' to discover the filth, stench, and venom of a man's heart and actions, and make him to lie under the condemnation of it, without any accusation of the righteousness of God. Hence it is said, that 'The law entered

that sin might abound,' Rom. v. 20 ; not to make it abound by encouraging the commission of it, but by impressing the conviction. A man before thinks himself a scanty and mole-hill sinner, but after the sight of the law, deep consideration, and the sense of it, he seeth himself a large and mountainous sinner, though he may appear small to the eye of man. And the Spirit discovers by the law the extent of sin ; by the breadth of the law, the Spirit helps us to measure the latitude of sin. Naturally we think not sin to be so great as it is, but its dimensions are seen through the glass of the word, which shews it to be exceeding broad ; as a star which a child thinks is but a little spark, is known and discerned by an instrument to be bigger than the globe of the earth. The Spirit shews the extent of the precept, and thereby measures the wideness of the sins ; he discovers the purity of the precept, and thereby the filthiness of sin. And as he discovers sin, so,

Secondly, Secret and lurking sins he discovers by the law. The Spirit, by this dissecting knife, opens the entrails of the heart, to manifest the secret holes and traverses of this inward serpent ; as when the body is opened, all the little strings within are plainly seen to the back-bone, τετραχηλισμένα, everything in the whole composition of it lies open to public view, Heb. iv. 12, 13. It divides soul and spirit ; it discovers what cattle litter in the affections and fancy. It doth unmask those spiritualised sins which harbour in the understanding and will ; those lusts which appear abroad in the garb of virtues, as acts of gallantry and generosity ; though they looked like stars of the firmament, it shews them to be but some unhappy vapours. The Spirit by the word opens both heart, and mind, and affections ; the spiritual and sensitive part of the soul of man brings the conscience, as he did Ezekiel, from chamber to chamber, to see the vermin which crawl in every part ; and as in dissection we see the valves and small fibres of the body, so the thoughts and intents of the heart, the secret aims wherein the spirit of wickedness lies, the counsels which gave the first birth unto sin, the close intents that had a fair outside, like a venomous serpent in a golden box, these the Spirit brings to light ; it rifles the very corners, and sheweth the inwardest and the least things, and fetcheth up that mud which lay under a clear stream, which conscience was not acquainted with before. And this discovery of lurking sins is not from the innate power of the law,—that hath not a power of omniscience,—but by the Spirit working by that law. It is God that ' searcheth the heart,' Jer. xvii. 10. It is God's heart, like Elisha, in 2 Kings v. 26, that goes with every man when he doth this or that. The Spirit doth work by the law, in the discovery of sin, both as to the extent of it, and as to secret sins. So,

Thirdly, It discovers the wrath of God due to sin by the law. As the gospel is a glass reflecting the glory and love of God upon the heart, so the law is a pure glass reflecting the holiness and wrath of God upon the conscience. The gospel represents God upon a throne, with a sceptre of grace and righteousness ; the law exhibits him upon a tribunal of justice, with a rod of iron and wrath. As the gospel is called the ' word of reconciliation,' so the law is the word of wrath ; it shews a man lying under God's displeasure at the brink of the pit, and holds him quaking over the smoke of hell. As the gospel is the ministration of life, so the other is the ministration of death ; it shews wrath entailed upon the least as well as the greatest iniquity, brandisheth and darts curses against the sinner. God is discovered in arms against the soul, going forth conquering and to conquer, with death and hell marching before him : Rom. ii. 8, 9, ' indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul that doth evil.' Sin is shewn in its filthiness, and wrath in its dreadfulness ; sin, too, in its guilt. By the law we

discern our debts, and are assured they must be paid. The law lays hold of every sinner, like that servant in the Gospel, and, with a dreadful voice, claims the debt, 'Pay me that thou owest!' That is the first thing the Spirit works by the law as an instrument.

Secondly, The Spirit doth stir up the natural notions and acquired knowledge in the mind in this conviction. He lets loose those truths in the heart which were prisoners in the chains of unrighteousness, to be assistant in this work, as invaders put arms into the hands of those prisoners which had been under a force before. This work is the exciting and reflecting the light and knowledge in the understanding upon the conscience, whereby the creature feels the heat of the light, which in its direct beams he did not; nor doth knowledge swimming in the brain affect; he blows up the sparks of reason to a height, and, like the sun, draws forth the sap of those notions implanted in the heart, making them sprout up according as he first set them. For, as the sowing this seed was by the hand of the Spirit, so the improvement of these principles sown is, by the breath of the Spirit, in a way of common grace. He caused the birth, and he causes the growth too; that which he had sown he preserves and excites, so that when these notions are excited by the Spirit, men see double to what they did before discern of the secrets of wisdom and righteousness, and accordingly that there are more transgressions according to the law of nature than men usually dream of, which makes them justify God in the way of his judgments: Job. xi. 5, 6, 'Oh that God would speak and open his lips against thee, and that he would shew thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is! Know, therefore, that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.' It is an answer to Job's complaint, that his afflictions were without ground; which Zophar answers, that if the secrets of wisdom in the law of nature were excited, it would discover sin enough to justify God in his proceedings. The law of Moses was not in being in the time of Job, but in the original copy, the law of nature, and the common notions of mankind. The Spirit stirs up these in this conviction, and though the Spirit takes these, and works by the excitation of natural light, yet he brings in also another light, because the chief conviction he aims at is the corruption of the state, not only that of corrupt acts; the necessity of a mediator and a sense of spiritual sins, which cannot be wrought merely by that light which is naturally in the mind. It stirs up, therefore, principles already impressed, and introduceth principles not yet impressed, and binds both of them on the soul; for it convinceth by way of argument, and therefore its convictions must be founded on somewhat which the soul knew before, or arise from a new light attended with a greater evidence. Now, the Spirit of God doth not put out nature by the shining of grace, but improve, perfect, and regulate it, putting it into a right channel, making it to serve the ends of grace; so in this act of conviction, he maketh the natural knowledge subservient, and rouseth up that knowledge which lay rusty and useless. There is use of this, for God acts in a rational manner, that reason may be employed in this case; hence are his appeals to men (Isa. v. 3) of a depraved reason, 'O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.' Had reason no competency at all to judge of the unprofitableness and the bad return the vineyard had made to God, the appeal had been fruitless; but the appeal implies that even natural reason would have cast the verdict on God's side; so in conviction the Spirit doth stir up that natural light in the mind, and that acquired knowledge that it hath to be assistant in this work.

Thirdly, The Spirit doth irradiate and enlighten the mind and practical judgment. The Spirit brings a man to belief of the truth in the word by

clear and undeniable reason, and by rectifying and elevating the understanding. As he makes the characters written upon the heart legible, so he enlightens the dim mind, and snuffs the candle of the Lord, that they may be read, Prov. xx. 27, that thereby 'the inward parts of the belly' may be searched. In this regard he is called a Spirit of bondage; not that he brings us into bondage, but as he opens the curtain of sin and the blind eye to see the bondage sin hath brought it into. The truths of God in the word have an objective light, and the Spirit doth enlighten the mind, not by discovering new notions and giving new objects of knowledge only, but by creating a dogmatical faith and an assent unto those principles, and helping us to receive right and distinct notions of those things which are represented. And it is such a faith which the Spirit in this work doth create, which is not only apprehensive but quietative; it not only apprehends the things themselves, but the soul rests in them for truth, not that they are grounds of comfort in themselves, but doth clearly assent to them for truth, and own them, and fully assent unto them. There is a faith of assent common to men, but the Spirit quickens this faith in conviction that it hath a fuller prospect of these things which he doth discover, which were weakly and imperfectly assented to before; and the soul weighs these particulars which the Spirit sets before it more seriously than ever it did. This is a necessary work of the Spirit, for a stupefied judgment is a bar to any recovery; but when the light of the word and the light of the mind meet together, the issue is a full discovery of the motes in the soul and sink in the heart.

Fourthly, The Spirit excites and actuates the conscience, sets the conscience to smite, as David's heart smote him, upon the Spirit's touch by the ministry of Nathan. Most men know such and such actions to be sinful; they know unbelief to be a damning sin, God to be a righteous God, Christ the only Saviour, yet how few know these things convincingly, with an application of them to the conscience! How few have the descent from the speculative to the practical judgment, to be affected with them and with their own deplorable state! The Spirit, as it increaseth the light, it doth sharpen this faculty of conscience for self-reflection; direct beams are darted in to shew the object, and an edge is put upon the faculty to do its office. Light is shot in upon the understanding by the Spirit in the word, and fire is struck upon the conscience; suitable passions are raised in the heart by that light in the mind. As the Spirit of adoption giveth efficacy to the gospel, in affecting his soul with righteousness, so, as he is a Spirit of bondage, he giveth efficacy to the law to affect the conscience with guilt; he lets loose the natural activity of conscience, he arms it with a renewed commission, he opens the mouth of this herald of God, and makes it denounce dreadful things; he enlargeth it to take in the impressions of wrath, and transmit them to all parts of the man; he reviveth the guilt, and rouseth the conscience, the serpent in the bosom ariseth and hisseth, and conscience in man being awakened, lashes him. Thus sin being revived, and conscience awakened, they lay the soul flat and breathless. 'Sin revived, and I died.' Guilt is so strongly reflected, that a man doth not simply understand himself to be in a damnable state, but feels in himself the filthiness and misery of that state, and becometh a judge and witness against himself, acknowledging the righteousness of God, and the unrighteousness of his nature. Conscience, thus actuated by the Spirit, pleads sharply from the law against the soul (as a king's attorney doth against a prisoner at the bar), takes off all excuses, beats it off from all apologies made in its defence, and reproacheth him for it, Job xxvii. 6. It brings not only the substance of sin but the circumstances to mind, and what rebukes itself gave before to hinder the com-

mission, just as it will at the last day deliver those truths that were suppressed and clouded in unrighteousness, and usher them in as so many speaking witnesses; the memory is also revived to assist conscience in this work. Now, the Spirit only can excite conscience; though conscience hath a power to judge, yet it must have a light to judge by, and because it is sleepy and dull, it must be soundly roused; and therefore there is the same need that the Spirit should set conscience right, as any other faculty; because that is depraved, as well as the understanding is darkened and the will perverted.

Fifthly, The Spirit brings forgotten sins to mind, and presseth them upon the conscience. As the Samaritan woman concludes Christ to be the Messiah, because he 'told her all that ever she had done,' John iv. 29, so the renewing upon us the sense of all that ever we did, is an evidence of the Spirit's work. When old, forgotten sins are brought to light in the mind, it is an effect of God's Spirit, who is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things. Thus the Spirit doth set in order youthful sins in old age, makes men to 'possess the sins of their youth,' as in Job; and gathers iniquities laid in the dust together, upon the beating the drum of conscience, and fills the soul with the sense and consideration of them, and brings in an old score of sin with many items. Item, such a time a contempt of God; such a time a speculative wickedness; such a time a quenching of the Spirit; profane speech; swarms of vain thoughts and vile lusts; the many aggravations of sin against mercies, in the very face of God, when a pardon was offered; rebellion against the light of conscience; stifling holy motions; breaking the bonds of love; the influence our sins had upon others; principles and root of sin; enmity to God; secret rising of heart against the purity of the law. Thus it brings sins that were forgotten, and sets them home: Ps. cxix. 59, 'I considered my ways.' He counted his ways and his sins one by one, as the word there signifies, as much as he could, and as the Spirit of God directed. Though many times the Spirit lays one sin closest, yet all the rest are brought in, and severally charged; as in a pestilent disease all the humours wherewith the body was troubled before run into that infectious disease; and the soul is made to read those sins as plainly as if they had been committed but the day before. A wicked man 'knoweth not whither he goeth,' 1 John ii. 11; he hath no clear knowledge of the nature of sin and the dreadfulfulness of wrath. But the Spirit in this work makes us not only see sin, but giveth an intuitive knowledge of it; draws the veil from the face of sin, washeth off its varnish, pulls away its fine dress and attire, and presents it as the greatest evil, and in its most Ethiopian deformity.

Sixthly, The Spirit fixeth the sense of the most terrible attributes of God upon the soul in this work. His justice, eternity, holiness, are brandished against him, and mercy seems standing aloof from him. He makes him look upon justice incensed, holiness disparaged, mercy slighted, power preparing a Tophet of wrath, and kindling it against it, and eternity perpetuating the punishment; and hides all considerations of God that might give hope of relief. Upon these perfections of God, which breathe terror against the sins of men, is conviction founded. Men naturally have a greater sense of God's mercy than any other attributes, because mercy and patience are more continually exposed to their view, in the warm sun, influences of heaven, fruitful showers, and kindly provisions, which multiply the notion of his mercy in the minds of men. And from those ideas, fortified by these common works of kindness, and from self-love in men's breasts, doth arise men's confidence and presumption in the mercy of God. And therefore the soul is never soundly convinced of its own natural state till self-love be shaken, and the other attributes of God seriously pondered and owned. When the soul is in a dead sleep, there

is no consideration of justice; and when awakened by the law, without the sight of the gospel, and a discovery of his mercy in Christ, like Adam and Eve the soul runs from God's presence, and every voice of God is terrible; and finding himself culpable, and seeing nothing but a sea of sin, he fears the justice of God, that the sovereign Judge of all the world will bring him to a speedy account, and inflict that death that he knows himself worthy of. Now, the consideration of these attributes have in the holiest men always caused in them reflections on their iniquities. Hence holy men in Scripture, upon some apparition of God, or an angel, were full of apprehensions of God's holiness and their own impurity, which possessed them with expectations of death, when they looked upon God as a consuming fire, and themselves as dry stubble, Ezek. iii. 6, Judges xiii. 22, Isa. vi. 6.

Seventhly, The Spirit of God removes, in this work of conviction, all the former supports which the soul leaned upon. It blows up all the little castles of defence, puffs them away as chaff, makes conscience work through all the plasters laid on to assuage the grief, lays the soul naked without any covering. The heart of man being stuffed with self-love, frames a multitude of miserable comforters as weak as Adam's fig-leaves; but when the Spirit ariseth in the ministry of the law, he tears all those coverings, nonplusses all those subtle evasions, breaks all those props and crutches in pieces, and casts down the soul before the foot of God's righteous judgment, that it dares not cast a glance, a loving look, towards that Sodom which God hath fired; knocks off the hands from all those things whereby men would compound with God and their guilty consciences; all the strong reasonings for the life of their lusts, and the presumptuous arguings for the salvation of their souls, fall before the battery of the word, which like an engine plays against the high-built and pleasant imaginations. He pulls up the foundation of their own righteousness, strips it of its painted garment, and makes them look upon their pretended beauties as loathsome deformities. When sin revives by the commandment, the sinner dies in the former opinion he had of himself; the sentence of death in himself is attended with death in all his comforts. And upon this account afflictions are mighty helpful to this work, when the Spirit sets in with them. When the supports of sin are drawn away, the evil of sin is more seen, which was not observed by men in the midst of their wealth and pleasure. When he 'holds them in afflictions,' then 'he shews them their work and their transgression, wherein they have exceeded; he openeth their ear also to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity,' Job xxxvi. 8-10. On this account God takes afflictions as the proper season to carry on this convincing work. For the rod puts life into the word, and makes men look inward to their consciences, and outward to their actions. When their former supports are pulled down about their ears, and conscience is quickened by the Spirit, then is the time for it to shew its commission; whereas in the hurry of pleasures it was wholly silent. And while the Spirit doth arm conscience against a man, he doth suspend the force and fury of his lusts, which before stopped the mouth of it.

Eighthly, The Spirit makes the soul intent upon the consideration of its sin, and those evidences which are brought in against it.

(1.) Upon the consideration of its sin. The thoughts of his sin haunt him like so many ghosts, and conscience, like Zipporah to Moses, flies in his face; not once, but with a repetition, 'A bloody husband hast thou been unto me.' It gives no respite, every thought is a particular sting; wherever he looks, sin stares upon him; and wherever he is or moves, conscience is with him, thundering in his ears the curses of the law, and flashing in his face the fire of hell, and presenting the black scroll to his consideration.

His sin is ever before him, which Job calls, chap. xiii. 27, a putting his feet in the stocks. He cannot move but he feels the smart of his wounds at every motion. The Spirit 'seals instruction;' he sets such a brand upon the conscience, that all the art of men cannot raze it out; it is held in by the law, Rom. vii. 6, and 'filled with bitterness,' Job ix. 18. The Spirit stakes him down, and points him to his sins. Lo, these are thy sins, and these will be thy plagues without a conversion. He will not let him take one sweet draught, nor a mouthful of cool air; he fixeth his eyes upon sin with sorrow, as much as his eyes were before upon it with joy. The soul had heard a thousand times of its lying, swearing, drunkenness, uncleanness, and other wickednesses; the necessity of conversion, the misery of hell, and the pleasures of heaven; but all were vanishing sounds, till the Spirit sounds the trumpet of the law, and fixeth truths upon the conscience, and maketh reason perform its office; then he 'holds the eyes waking,' Ps. lxxvii. 4, and the soul cannot speak of anything but its trouble. For as the Spirit brings to remembrance the promises of Christ, and fixeth them as a ground of faith, brings to remembrance the precepts of Christ, and setteth them upon the soul as a ground of obedience, so, as a Spirit of bondage, he brings the threatenings of the law, and leaves the stamp of them upon us, that we cannot look off from them; inlays the law in the heart as a law of death, as in conversion and faith it is engraven as a law of life. Thus Christ dealt with Paul; Acts ix. 4, tells him of his persecuting, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' When Paul would know who it was who spoke to him: ver. 5, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth;' yet holds his eyes still upon his sin, 'Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.' These considerations break in like a deluge on the soul, so that none can stop them, and they attend the person at his bed, and table, and shop, and walk, and they incorporate themselves with him. And the Spirit

(2.) Doth follow the soul with one word after another, and presseth and urgeth more and more that which may make a thorough conviction. The word to natural men is like a flash of lightning, that scareth and vanisheth; it is like an arrow shot against a brazen wall, that immediately falls down again; it is a glass wherein a man seeth his face, and quickly forgets his own physiognomy. But the Spirit in this work holds the glass before the face, presseth upon the soul the pure interpretation, the sense and meaning of the law, drives it deep, like a nail that cannot be pulled out, doth many times providentially guide a man to those places of Scripture that sharpen the conviction, and rend the soul wider, as a torn garment is by every nail that catches hold of it; and never leaves it till he brings it to subscribe, I am the man whose name is written here, I am the man who is meant in this curse. But then,

Ninthly, The Spirit springs up fears in the soul at the consideration of this state. Fears, so far as they are not sinful, are the work of the Spirit, as a Spirit of bondage; he concludes it under a state of unbelief, makes it understand the intolerableness and duration of its misery in that state, puts the question to it, whether it can dwell with everlasting burnings? The Spirit presents it with a pure law, a righteous judge, and a deserved wrath. Now it is natural for any man under the just sentence of the law for a capital crime, to be full of dread. There is fire and thunder in the particular application of the law, as there was in the first delivery of it on mount Sinai; and since the transgression of the law, there is nothing but death, horror, and the curses of it, ready to seize upon the soul. It may well set the holiest men, when they examine themselves by it, on trembling, as Moses did at the delivery of it, Heb. xii. 21. And indeed it is impossible for the

Spirit to act, in an ordinary way, but according to the nature of that word which is presented to the mind. If a promise be applied, the proper consequent of that is comfort; if a threatening be impressed upon the mind, the proper consequent of that is terror; if a precept, the immediate operation of that is obedience. Therefore the Spirit can be no other but a spirit of bondage, exciting troubles in the soul, as it works by the law, because there is no promise of reward in that, but to those that perfectly obey. If the law met with a pure heart, free from all taint of sin, the Spirit would engender comfort by it; but since there are deep spots in the hearts and natures of all men, God by the law only persuades them of the truth of that; and it is impossible that from the law alone anything should arise but what is slavish. If the Spirit speak no other word but the law, it can produce nothing but terror and condemnation. What terrors must then seize upon the spirits of men, and what distresses be rooted in their souls, when they consider themselves cut off from all hopes of mercy by the law, having broken it, and no promise giving any ground of comfort, but a curse pronounced by the violation of it? And how severe that is you may see: Gal. iii. 10, 'Curseth is every one that continueth not in every thing to do it.' Now when a man seeth he hath no title to heaven in regard of the curse, no disposition to heaven in regard of his nature, and that the curse of the law is his right before the legal bar, and beholds the sparklings of wrath, without any cloud to shelter him, can a man see this without self-condemning, and a crying out, 'I am undone, I am undone'? When conscience is thus awakened, sin thus presented, the law thus manifested, and the soul held down to the consideration of all, it is as impossible it can be without inward convulsions, as the ground without earthquakes which hath air in its bowels without any vent. This thunder from Sinai raiseth nothing else but blackness, and darkness, and storms in the region of the soul.

Lastly, The Spirit, in a saving conviction, brings the soul after this wounding to a self-debasing and humiliation. Man is the most backward in the world to the charging guilt upon himself, he is more skilful at self-excuses than self-indictments; but the Spirit brings the soul to comply with the end of the ministration of the law, which is, 'that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God,' Rom. iii. 19. By this revelation of the secrets of the heart, and the urgency of conscience, the overpowering work of the Spirit, the soul makes a positive conclusion against itself to the glory of God, 1 Cor. xiv. 25. Thus by sharpening his arrows in the hearts of his enemies, Ps. xlv. 5, he makes his enemies fall under him, in an acknowledgment of his righteousness and power, and the unlikeness of their hearts to the purity of the law; not extenuating the guilt, but loading themselves with it to a self-abhorrence; abhorring themselves in dust and ashes, counting themselves as dead dogs, to violate so holy, righteous, just, and good a law; and turning all their self-righteousness to shame, heartily wishing those sins which gall them had never been committed. And after this, when the gospel is presented, the soul enters into debates with itself, and makes a judicious comparison between the first covenant, and condemnation by that, and the second covenant, and life by that. Here are flames of wrath, and there are rivers of joy; here is a lake that burns, there is a paradise that refresheth; here is a flying roll, full of curses, which will seize upon me, there is a rich gospel, full of blessings, that is offered to me; here is death to sinners that will not have God to reign over them, there is life to believers that submit with the obedience of faith. If I sin while I live, I must perish when I die; I must be saved by grace, or be punished by wrath. And shall I sin away my hopes, to fall into a miserable eternity?

shall I sin myself to death, when the promise of grace is freely made to me in order to my salvation? Thus the soul is brought to a sense of sin by the law, and the insufficiency of the creature, and then welcome Christ, and gospel, and covenant, and promises of grace; welcome the yoke of Christ. And when it cometh to this, then conviction ends, hath its perfect work, concluding in a thorough conversion and acceptance of Christ.

IV. The fourth thing; what sins, or what in sin the Spirit doth chiefly convince of! The conviction by any other cause is partial, it is but half baked, roast on one side, and raw on the other; the Spirit's conviction is universal, he holds a right rule to the crooked heart; he measures all the dimensions of the soul, and of sin in it, considers root and branch, leaves and fruit. As the Spirit in a good man mortifies all sin, cleanses from all sin, so in this work he discovers all sin.

First, The Spirit usually singles out some one sin at the first to set home upon the soul; sometimes some base unworthy action, some blasphemous word, some disparaging thought of God, some captain and master sin, which is first brought out to face the soul, and presented in its hideous shape: as crucifying the Saviour of the world was charged by Peter upon the Jews, Acts ii.; fornication upon the woman of Samaria, by Christ, John iv. 18. As the Spirit of adoption, in working assurance, evidenceth to the soul some one particular grace which is wrought in the soul, whereby he may be able to judge of his state; so, as a Spirit of bondage, he presseth some particular sin at first, whereby a man may judge of his deplorable condition. Some one sin the Spirit takes hold of, to begin this work of conviction. But though one sin chiefly sticks in the conscience at first, yet in the Spirit's work all others do rush in afterwards to have their share. When one bee cometh forth and stings one that hath disturbed the hive, the rest come out to revenge the quarrel; or when one mastiff sets upon a passenger, all the rest will come barking in. The guilt of one sin is let loose upon the conscience; not that the work ends here (for then the soul might be lost), but this is an introduction. Judas's thought dwelt only upon one sin, Mat. xxvii. 4, betraying innocent blood, that did affect him; but he never searched further into the kennel, never into the depravation of his nature. But the Spirit begins at one, and leads the soul from chamber to chamber, from lust to lust, till it hath viewed the whole den by degrees; for he doth not shew all at once, that the soul for whom he hath kind thoughts may not fail before him.

Secondly, The Spirit usually convinceth the soul first of gross sins. He begins with these, because they are more legible and obvious by natural light, which of itself condemns them, and sets the soul speechless. As in the siege of a town, batteries are planted against that part of it which is weakest. Sins in the conversation are more visible than those that lie secret in the heart, other sins are obscured by these outward ones, as stars are by a bigger light, and a little spot by a greater stain; these are more visible to the inward senses, and more easily read by conscience, by principles of reason which rise up in accusation of them. David's murder and adultery first affected his conscience by Nathan's ministry, but in the progress he complains of his hypocrisy, Ps. li. 10; of those sins which poured in their streams to the increasing that river, those auxiliaries which had contributed their assistance to maintain his heart in its hardness for that sin. As in thankfulness one great mercy appears, but when that is dissected, the whole train of mercies appear; so in conviction, one gross sin first shews itself, and when this is discerned, the whole litter comes in view. Christ

rouseth Paul for his persecution first, but after, if spread further on his conscience; for he acknowledges himself not only a persecutor, but a blasphemer and injurious. The Spirit holds the conscience to the visible letter of the law before he applies the invisible spirit of it to the heart, and affects the heart with that which is biggest, because of its nearness, rather than others, which, though as bad or worse, seem less by reason of their remoteness.

Thirdly, The Spirit from thence proceedeth to the conviction of the bosom sin. All men worship some golden calf, set up by education, custom, natural inclination, or the like; and while a Delilah lies in the bosom and engrosseth the affections, the soul cannot be set with its love upon God; and if the heart be disaffected to this, the others are more easily hated. When a general is taken, the army runs. This is the great stream, others but rivulets which bring supply. The disaffecting the soul to this, facilitates the remaining work, because this is the strongest chain wherein the devil holds a man, the main fort. The Spirit fights against the lighter parties that come forth, but chiefly against that which hath been the great commander of all the other forces against God, and the greatest confidence of the devil. As a wise general directs his force against the stoutest body, wherein the strength of the enemy consists, when that is worsted, the arms presently fall out of the hands of the rest. Other sins are as the stragglers of an army, by the routing of which the victory is not obtained, but by the shattering the main body. The Spirit doth chiefly convince of this bosom sin. Violence was the soldiers', extortion was the publicans' sin, and the Spirit directs John Baptist against these; hypocrisy was the darling iniquity of the pharisees, Christ plants his battery most against this; Paul, in his whole progress after conversion, abhors most his persecution. As sanctification is a cleansing a man from his iniquity, so is a conviction of the Spirit, a discovering to a man his proper iniquity, Ps. xviii. 21.

Fourthly, Thence the Spirit directs the soul to a sight of its corruption by nature, opens the root of bitterness, makes us smell the sink of sin, discovers the dunghill whence all these little serpents derived their life and strength, shews us the rotten core as well as the worm-eaten skin; that the nature of the person lies in wickedness, as a mole in the earth, or a carcase in putrefaction, 1 John v. 19, all under sin, no good spring in the heart; that there is poison in the heart, that taints every work of the hand, imagination, fancy, thoughts of the mind, and motions of the will. He brings a man from the chamber of outward to the closet of inward sins, until he arriveth to the large room of nature; bids him see if he can find out one clean corner in the heart, and so conducts him to the first sin of Adam, makes him behold the first fountain whence all issued, and all little enough to make the proud heart stoop to God. He makes him consider he is deeply concerned in that first sin, though so many revolutions of years have passed. This makes a man vile in his own eyes, that he cannot look upon himself, but with confusion and an universal blush. God looks to this sin of nature as the ground of punishment: Gen. vi. 5, 6, 'The imagination of the heart was only evil,' and therefore it repented God that he made man on the earth; therefore the Spirit doth affect most with this in conviction. As Christ came to cure the wound of nature, so the Spirit shews the impurity of nature in order to that cure; he would not else act upon the foundation Christ had laid. He is sent to convince men of their need of Christ, therefore of that which lays men under the greatest necessity of Christ, which is the violation of the first covenant, and the evil consequents of it.

As the Spirit in mortification strikes to the root of sin, so in conviction he digs to it; as in sanctification he cleanses from the sink of sin, so in conviction he shews it. Christ, in his discourse with Nicodemus, lays this open to him, who thought the doctrine of the necessity of regeneration a strange kind of discourse, and must needs think so, until he understood, John iii. 6, that 'that which is born of the flesh is flesh,' that nature was universally depraved. David begins with a sense of his adultery in his conviction, but traceth up his sin to the spring, his natural conception, Ps. li. 5. He followeth the young cubs to the old one's den, where he found sin's mark upon every member at his first formation. If the Spirit did not convince of this, he did little or nothing to the purpose; for as long as we think there is any good in us, we shall depend upon it, and never go to Christ. But when we see the running issue of nature, as well as the outflowings of nature, then we shall with open arms fly to him. To be ignorant of this, and complain of other sins, is a sign of conscience but half awakened. This is the proper work of the Spirit, and it cannot be done without this; the branches and fruit are visible, so are the beams and rafters of a house, but the root and foundation lies under ground. The Spirit shews this corruption of nature not by a glimmering but clear light; not only shews a man that he is fallen, but makes him see the heavens in their glory, from whence he fell; hell in its misery, to which he fell. He affects him with his nature, as the seminary of all sin, as a womb to prepare and ripen sin, until a suitable temptation is offered to give birth to it.

Fifthly, The Spirit convinceth of the evil nature of sin; and this is a necessary work of the Spirit. As in striving against it, the renewed soul quarrels with it as it is sin, so in a thorough conviction the Spirit doth unmask it as it is sin; he presents it under those considerations upon which the soul is to fight against it; he evidenceth it sensibly to be enmity to God, to his essence, attributes, his law, turning the back upon God with the greatest scorn, and lifting up the heel against him, Jer. xxxii. 33, endeavouring to despoil God of his government (whence sinners are said to be without God in the world), casting the holy law behind their backs, preferring a dirty creature before the Creator, a base lust before a blessed Jesus. He doth evidence every sin to be idolatry, an implicit adoration of Satan: ingratitude, because our mercies are received after our lives were forfeited; theft, in robbing God of that reverence that is due to him, and the revenues of his glory; unbelief, not believing his promises whereby he allures, nor his threatenings whereby he scares; unfaithfulness, in breach of covenant, and abundance more bound up in the womb of sin; this the Spirit doth convince a man is in the nature of sin, in every sin. Now, the Spirit shews sin to be an injury to a gracious God, impurity, disingenuity against a holy God, disloyalty to our supreme Lord, a breach of a holy and righteous law, a stab to the heart of Christ, a shedding the best blood that ever was, and such a heinous thing as is not to be remitted without the blood of God. As the Spirit's second conviction, of the righteousness of Christ, is as it is the expiating cause of the sin of man, so his first discovery of sin is, as it appears to be the occasion of the death of Christ. Without this conviction of the evil nature of sin, the Spirit is not like to attain its end; for there cannot be a conversion till a man be sensible of what sin is in its own nature, aversion from God, alienation and contrariety to him.

Sixthly, The Spirit doth convince of the filthiness and pollution of sin. Sin is the contagion of the soul, the universal stain of nature; nothing but pollution succeeded in the place of original purity. The Scripture doth set forth sin to us under all the vilest terms, calls it an Ethiopian blackness,

spots, mire, dirt, dung, plague, ulcer, sore. As there is a saltness in every drop of water in the sea, so there is a filthiness in every action of sin. The Spirit discovers the naughtiness of the heart, and the nastiness of lusts, being more loathsome than toads, and infectious than plagues: Isa. lvii. 20, the wicked man's heart is like the sea, 'casting up mire and dirt.' The Spirit in this work doth (as it were) spread dung in the face of the sinner, he shews what slime and frogs it hath left behind in every part it hath touched, that he may feel as well as see the loathsomeness of it. When the Spirit cometh thus as a judge into the soul, though we seem to be washed with snow-water, and our hands appear clean, yet we shall be as plunged in a ditch, that our own clothes will abhor us, Job ix. 30, 31. Then a man sees himself bemired from head to foot, like one over head and ears in a common sewer. By seeing original sin, we see the defilement of it, how it hath infected the whole nature; and that human nature is not like a river to purify itself, but its mud is increased rather than diminished. If the Spirit should stir up all the stench of sin, and unmask all its ugliness, without making any further progress, utter despair, fury, confusion, self-hatred, would be the effect of it. The Spirit in this work must needs discover this filthiness, if he attain his end in it. For as the soul in sanctification is to purge out sin by the strength of the Spirit, so it is necessary by conviction it should see the filth of that that is to be purged out, as an incentive to cleanse it. No soul will hate it, no soul will move its hand to its expulsion, till it be stripped of its painted colours, till it be shewn in its native blackness, till the serpent be stripped of his skin, and manifested in the venom and poison of its nature. Cain saw his sin in the wrathful effects, as it was not forgiven, but not in the polluting effect, as the blood of his brother had defiled his conscience. When we see the guilt, it terrifieth us; and the filth, it shameth us: the one makes us desire ease, the other cleansing. Without this sight we cannot justify God in his righteousness, nor admire him in his patience, that he did not long since fling such nasty vessels on the dunghill; without a sight of this we can never hate sin spiritually. Sensibleness of the wrath that is due to it may make us fear it, but it is sensibleness of the filthiness of it that must make us loathe it. Both these are the designs of the Holy Spirit in conviction, to make God appear admirable, desirable, and sin appear hateful. Then,

Seventhly, The Spirit convinceth of spiritual sins, and this is the great work. It convinces of the corruption of nature, the nature of sin, and the filth of sin; but it presseth most upon spiritual sins, the first motions, self-conceit of our own worth, pride against God, unbelief, and the like. Conscience hath a natural edge to wound a man for those sins which render a man inexcusable by the light of nature; but some sins lie remote out of sight, as spiritual wickedness in the high places of understanding, will, and affections, yea, and of conscience itself; a clearer light and a more piercing principle is requisite for the discovery of these. Drunkenness, murder, luxury, theft, &c., are sins condemned by the general consent of nature; the works of the visibly defiled flesh are manifest, but the works of refined flesh lie closer in the inward corner, and are not so easily discovered, though there is a greater defilement in these than men commonly imagine. Other sins disgrace us more in the eye of men, and these defile us more in the eye of God. The soul, which ought to be a living temple for God, is defiled by these sins, which is as if the throne of a prince should be besmeared with dung. That is worse in the eye of God, which consists in a conformity to the devil, God's great enemy, than that which consists in a conformity to the brutish creature, as sins of the flesh are. They are the strength of sin,

the heart and life of the body of death, the main fort, the other sins are but the outworks. The great end of the Spirit is to convince of these. The outworks must be first taken, therefore gross sins must be first known; yet there is no hopes of conquest while the main strength remains invisible. As sanctification begins at the sins of the flesh, but grows up to a cleansing from spiritual sins, so must a sense of sin in order to sanctification sail the same course. These being the subjects of the Spirit's sanctification, as that wherein the enemy's chief strength lies, are the subject of conviction too; and herein consists the spirituality of conviction. As the strength of an eye appears in discovering the spots in the sun, which lie covered with a rich robe of light, so the strength of conviction in the spirituality of it is discerned in the eye's discovering the stains in the heart, which are covered with a beautiful cloak of outward morality. When sciences are learned, the rudiments and more obvious principles are known before the mysteries are understood, and men grow up from a common to an abstruse knowledge; so the Spirit leads us from a sight and sense of more visible, till it dives at length to the secrets of sin, to the deceivableness of unrighteousness in the spiritual antichrist working in the soul. No spiritual conviction without a conviction of spiritual sins. A natural man may by natural conscience be convinced of great sins against the light of nature, as a dim eye can read a great print; but such are usually most sensible of sins against the second table, or more open sins against the first; but the Spirit convinceth of the more inward imperceptible sins, affects it with those against both tables. Paul was convinced not only of the sins he acted without, as his persecution, but of sins dwelling in him, springing up in him, and discovering themselves by their motions in him. And,

Eighthly, The Spirit convinceth the soul of its own impotency and weakness. He shews the sinner his filth and his chains; how lust brings guilt and slavery; how his understanding is deprived of true light, and his will of true liberty; whence there is an utter inability to make up the breach between God and the soul, from whence his best righteousness smells rank, and contracts a taint from that corruption which is derived from Adam unto the whole human nature. Men naturally glory in their own power, they think grace no more than walking according to the rules of blinded reason, they understand not the depth of their wound, nor their weakness by it. Sins of infirmity they think they have, which are to nature only like the scratch of a pin, not like the stab of a sword; they think their vitals are sound and strong still. But the Spirit convinceth the soul that her wings are broke, and her feet crippled, and her hands possessed with a dead palsy; that man hath an universal impotency, spiritual feebleness, his weakness as incurable as his wickedness, that he can no more strengthen himself than purge himself, Rom. vii. 15. The Spirit convinceth man that his best strength is but a shadow of righteousness, that as he was mutable in righteousness in innocency, so since the fall he is immutable to sin, and unable to turn from it; that he is a slave to his lusts, held in chains till they be knocked off, shut up in a prison that he cannot break, and under the power of a jailor that he cannot conquer. Without this he would think to lick himself whole, and never lie sighing and sobbing at the foot of Christ. Though a man naturally justify himself, yet when the Spirit deals with him, overturns all his props, and discovers him overgrown with feebleness as well as sinfulness, he cries, like Job, chap. ix. 20, 21, 'If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul; I would despise my life.'

Ninthly, He doth continually convince of the consequences and demerits

of sin. He doth dissect sin, and shew it in its circumstances, and he doth convince and set home upon the soul the demerit of sin; and (though he doth also propose the gospel) he sets home that wrath which is deserved by it. For he speaks a language quite contrary to that of the devil to our first parents, persuading Adam that no wrath would ensue upon it; that he should meet with life in eating the forbidden fruit. The Spirit's method is contrary to that of the devil; death is the wages of every iniquity. You shall be as gods, saith Satan; you have made yourselves like devils, saith the Spirit; are transformed into the devil's nature, fallen into the devil's condemnation. The Spirit sets home what it deserves at the hands of God; although he doth propose the gospel, yet he affects the soul with what sin hath deserved.

V. The fifth thing is, What the difference is between the convictions of the Spirit by this or that instrument, by nature, law, and gospel. What difference there is between the Spirit's setting sin before us in a way of conviction, and Satan's setting sin before us, who doth interest himself sometimes in this conviction of sin, when it is attended with much terror; what the difference is between the sense of sin barely from natural principles, and a sense of sin that is wrought by the Spirit; then what the difference is between a legal and an evangelical conviction.

1. Though there are some beams of candle-light in nature, which make a discovery of some unrighteousness, whence arise rebukes of conscience, yet nature is not able to furnish us with a full conviction, and such a one as is necessary for our repair. Blind nature cannot see the rubbish, much less remove it; depraved nature is not sensible of all its crookedness, much less can it rectify it: it cannot hew and prepare itself for the introduction of the image of God. The highest natural improvements of our natural faculties cannot guide us into the close dens and chambers of sin, and give us a true prospect of the poisonous entrails of it. Nature may spring up some good operations in the heart, take nature in its latitude, what a man may be in his natural state, before his conversion to Christ; nature as it is propped up by the mediation of Christ, and as there are some commendable relics left in it, there are still some inbred principles which bring forth many excellent things according to their proportion; as there is virtue in the earth since the curse of it after man's fall, to bring forth many excellent plants and medicinal herbs. But these convictions by nature are,

First, Light and uncertain, of a short duration; they are sudden qualms and fits upon some observation of outward judgments. As all judgments are sent to make men sensible there is a God in the earth, and that there are unrighteous actions that are displeasing to him, upon these judgments there are some reflections in a natural conscience, some sense of God, what is due to sin, and what deviations are from him; but they continue no longer than the cause that raised them; they are sudden frights and startings, which soon settle again, as in a sudden fright and start nature is speedily reduced to its former temper, and the blood that was put on the sudden into another motion is quickly brought to its former consistence. They are usually like a land-flood, which causes an inundation, but sink not into the roots of the soul: Ps. ix. 21, they are 'put in fear,' and while they are in fear, they 'know themselves to be but men.' It is a work not so much upon the judgment as upon the affections, therefore it is like a fire falling upon flax, and other combustible matter, which flames and expires, and you see its death almost as soon as it begins to live; whereas, those convictions that arise from the Spirit settle upon the judgment, and, like a fire in a log of wood, are kept alive in the soul, eat into the soul, dive into the bottom, produce

serious and lasting affections. Conscience is staggering and unfixed, therefore whatsoever ariseth from it, partaketh of the uncertain nature of the cause. We shall be moveable in our affections, unless first stedfast in our judgment; until then, there can be no abounding in the work of the Lord. The apostle makes one the cause of the other: 1 Cor. xv. 58, 'Be stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.' First a stedfastness in judgment, and then a settlement in the affections, and then an abounding in practice. No conviction can fasten in a rolling and unballasted mind, no conviction that ariseth from nature. Besides, fear is an unwelcome passion, as love is a delightful one; nature is held longer in the chains of love than in the fetters of fear: the one it hugs and embraceth, the other it knocks off. The whole course of nature strives against flashes of fear, and will not endure the object of it; not invite and encourage its stay, but rather is up in arms against it; and, upon this account, those convictions that arise barely from natural principles, from anything of bare nature, are not of long duration. Any conviction from nature is like the smart of a prick of a pin in the flesh, which is soon forgot; a conviction by the Spirit is like the stab of a sword in the heart. The arrows of nature are easily plucked out, but God's arrows stick fast, Job vi. 4. Nature likes not to retain anything of God in its knowledge, Rom. i. 28; but the Spirit imprints things and holds them upon the soul, binds his corrosive to it, that it cannot shake it off.

Secondly, Convictions by nature do at best but stand at a stay; they are not growing. If the convictions by nature do remain, yet they are not growing convictions, they gather not strength and perfection every day; if they do not decay and fall, as a seeming star, into dust and rottenness, yet they rise not up into a stronger light, are not in a state of progress, but are stunted to low measures. If they do seem bigger, it is by an external addition from multiplied causes and renewed observation of judgments, not from any internal principle of an enlightened mind; but, in the conviction of the Spirit, the light yesterday was as the light of a torch, to-morrow as the moon, and still rising till it be as the sun, which discovers the filthiness and little motes of the heart, as the sun doth the filthiness as well as the beauty of the earth; and this light will increase sevenfold, as the light of seven days put into one: Prov. iv. 18, 'The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' His path from his first stepping into anything that tends to it, is as the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day; whereas the way of the wicked is as darkness: a sudden gleam of light lighting upon him and vanishing, leaves his eye under more darkness than before. The Spirit makes a progress from the first step towards righteousness, till the dawning of the day of righteousness in the soul. As Christ came not only to give life, but to give it more abundantly, John x. 10, so the Spirit giveth not small flashes of light in the mind and conscience, but an abundant and growing light. Usually, convictions of nature do stand at a stay; nature will not row long against the stream, but at last be carried down by its force. Talents not improved are quickly lost, and plants, when they begin to wither, never cease till quite blasted, unless influenced afresh by the beams and showers of heaven.

Thirdly, Natural convictions arise from some external cause, spiritual from the word imprinted upon the soul. Natural convictions are, from some natural outward cause, only from the sight of judgments on others, or some personal afflictions on themselves; but the word is the sword of the Spirit, Ephes. vi. 17, whereby he cuts open the soul. By this he did execution upon those whose hands were red with the blood of Christ, Acts ii. This is always his instrument to cut, though he useth judgments and afflictions

as whetstones to sharpen the edge, or as a mallet to strike it in the deeper. David, a most intelligent person, well skilled in natural notions, was not convinced of his sin of murder and adultery by any immediate excitation of his natural principles, or those spiritual notions in his mind, without the instrumentality of the word in the mouth of Nathan; that man of understanding was not sensible of his sin, till Nathan came with a message from God, and upon this alarm the Spirit arms his memory, and conscience, and understanding, to carry on the work, 2 Sam. xii. 7, 8. The filthy soul and the pure word are brought together when a spiritual conviction is wrought, and it discovers millions of loathsome lusts which the dim light of nature could never discern. That is the first thing; the difference between the convictions of nature and the Spirit.

2. There are also differences between legal and evangelical convictions. And,

First, In regard of the principles whence they proceed.

(1.) A legal conviction ariseth from a consideration of God's justice chiefly, an evangelical from a sense of God's goodness. A legally convinced person cries out, I have exasperated a power that is as the roaring of a lion, a justice that is as the voice of thunder; I have provoked one that is the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, whose word can tear up the foundations of the world with as much ease as he established them. This is the legal conviction. But an evangelically convinced person cries, I have incensed a goodness that is like the dropping of the dew; I have offended a God that had the deportment of a friend, rather than that of a sovereign. I have incurred the anger of a judge, saith a legalist; I have abused the tenderness of a father, saith an evangelically convinced person. Oh my marble, my iron heart, against a patient, wooing God, a God of bowels! It makes every review of acts of kindness to be a sting in the conscience; it makes such a person miserable by mercy, and scorches him with the beams of goodness; turns the honey into a bitter pill, and useth a branch of the balsam tree as a rod wherewith to lash him. O wretch, to run from so sweet a fountain to rake in puddles! to rush into a river of brimstone, through a sea of goodness! What a cut is it, when ingenuity is awakened, to reject a natural goodness, much more an infinite goodness; to reject the goodness of a man, much more that of a God; the goodness of a friend never provoked, much more the goodness of a God that had been so highly incensed! There is a torture of hell in both, kindled by the breath of the Lord; in the one by the breath of his wrath, in the other by the breath of his goodness. One is inflamed by justice to a sense of rebellion, the other by goodness to a sense of his own vileness. This is that which was promised should be in gospel times, that in the latter days men should fear the Lord and his goodness, Hos. iii. 5. That is a true evangelical conviction, that springs from a thorough sense of God's goodness, when the goodness of God excites ingenuity, as well as the majesty of God strikes a terror.

(2.) A legal conviction springs from a sense of God's power, an evangelical from a sense of God's holiness. Power is the relief of a friend, and the terror of an enemy. Faith pitcheth upon the power of God for its establishment, and unbelief sinks under the sense of God's power with confusion; the believer stays himself upon the name of God, but the sinner languisheth under the consideration of the mightiness of that stroke that power can inflict. An evangelical convict dissolves under the sense of God's holiness, the other falls under the sense of God's power. I have offended majesty that can punish me, saith one; I have offended purity that would have sanctified me, saith the other. As the forgetfulness of God's power and

majesty is the cause of men's sins, we regard not how corrupt our practices and offerings to God are, when we consider him not as a great king and dreadful Lord, Mal. i. 14. As the forgetfulness of this is the cause of sin, so the remembrance of his greatness is the cause of man's reflection; but a beam of God's holiness shining upon the understanding makes a soul more sensible of its dross than all the flames of wrath. The angels solemnly applauding of God's holiness, which they cried up in Isaiah's hearing, Isa. vi. 3, 5;—one cried to another, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts,'—cast him down in a sense of his vileness. Then said I, 'Woe is me! because I am a man of unclean lips.' The sight of their covering their pure faces with their wings made him abhor, and cry out of the uncleanness of his soul. He saw the sun in its purity, and himself in his darkness and filthiness. A conviction by wrath is like a fire which only scorcheth; a conviction by holiness is like that of the sun, which burns by its heat, and discovers atoms by its light. The one measures his loathsomeness by the judgment of men, the other his filthiness by the holiness of God. Was I made for God? did not his holy as well as his powerful finger frame me? and am I so base as to wallow in corruption? But,

(3.) Legal conviction ariseth only from a sense of the omniscience of God, but an evangelical ariseth from a sense of the disaffection of God to sin. The cause why men sin is the unbelief of God's omniscience, and the cause why they are troubled is a sense of this attribute, and not of God's hatred of their sins. The first impression from the edge of the word is, 'that all things are naked and open before him with whom we have to do,' Heb. iv. 13; and that sins, even secret sins, are set in the light of his countenance, Ps. xc. 8. Men will forbear their actions of folly when they think the eye of a grave man beholds them, but are bold to commit them when his back is turned. If a prince be unknown behind the hangings, when subjects speak treason, they will be afraid when they discover he hath overheard them; not because they spoke it, but because he heard it; they consider it as the object of his knowledge, and the mark of his vengeance. A legalist considers God only as privy to his iniquity, the other as he is disaffected to it; he would never be troubled for his sin, if it never came under God's notice; the other sinks under it, because it is the object of God's displeasure. The one shakes, because he is convinced God observes it; the other trembles, because he is sensible God disapproves it.

(4.) A legal conviction is a sense of sin in the death of the soul, an evangelical is a sense of sin arising from the death of Christ. One person seeth sin in the misery of his soul, and the other in the cross of the Redeemer. The moral law condemns sin, and the practice of the ceremonial acknowledged that condemnation. The offerer saw himself in those sacrifices which died for him, guilty of death; hence in the renewing of them there was a remembrance of sin, Heb. x. 3, and the killing of them was a bond or handwriting, whereby they confessed themselves obnoxious to the curse, and debtors to punishment, Col. ii. 14. This was only a sight of sin in the death of a beast, though it typified the death of Christ. An evangelical conviction seeth sin in the sighs and groans, cries and agonies, suffering and blood of the Son of God, an only Son, an innocent Son, unspotted as to any inherency of sin in his person, only submitting to the imputation of sin to him, and infliction of punishment upon him, even to a commotion of soul and body. This giveth a clearer evidence of the demerit of sin to a full conviction, than the whole latitude of threatenings, or the roarings the damned utter, or the destroying millions of angels and men. This giveth ground for a full sense of the inviolable sanction of the law, the reasonable severity of

justice against us, and the unavoidable demerit of sin, more than thousands of sacrifices could discover to the Jews. The voice of Christ's blood discovers more the malignity of sin than all men or angels are able to express. In this glass doth the Spirit shew it, to convince the soul in an evangelical manner. One seeth sin in the handwriting of ordinances against him, and the other sees it more meltingly in the tearing and cancelling this bond and bill by Christ upon the cross. That is the first thing, they differ in the principles whence this sense doth arise.

Secondly, They differ in regard of the object of the conviction, or matter they are convinced of.

(1.) A legal convict accounts his torture the greatest evil, an evangelical his sin. Both indeed are burdened, the one with his punishment, the other with his desert of it; one counts his torment hateful, the other his sin abominable. The first is troubled there is not a beam of mercy, but not troubled that he hath not a spark of grace. He groans under the presages of damnation, but not under the want of holiness; he is of the devil's temper, Why dost thou torment us? but doth not desire to be restrained from sin, but to be kept from torment; cries out as Lamech, Gen. iv. 23, 'I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt'; not to God's dishonour, no complaint of that. It is true, he hath no pleasure in his sin, in the remembrance of it at the present, not for want of affection to it, but because it is embittered to him with the gall in his conscience; the law spits fire in his face, and makes his beloved object too hot for his holding; his allegiance to sin is not cast off, but at present only interrupted in the exercise. The other, the evangelically convinced man, cries out of his sin as the greatest burden, My God I have dishonoured, his Spirit I have grieved, his name I have slighted, and his mercy abused. And therefore the one, when his rack is laid aside, and the storm in his conscience blown over, falls as roundly to his former course as before; or if he abstains from that sin which was a cause of his smart, he opens his heart for more spiritual, and therefore more rooted iniquity, which breaks out into worse. Some think Ananias and Sapphira were in the number of those that had their hearts pricked at Peter's sermon, but their covetousness in a great measure remained in their affections, and ended in lying against the Holy Ghost. Such lay aside their apparel as players, to put on a disguise that suits the part they are to act, but strip themselves after, to put on their old garment again. Whereas the other, that is evangelically convinced, is more tender and careful to avoid the smallest slip as well as the grossest, not only when his conscience torments, but when the heat is allayed; careful to avoid sin in his duties, as well as in his more public conversation; he is afraid of the sting of sin, as well as of the sting of punishment; he judgeth sin his greatest evil, and next to that the want of God's favourable presence: 'How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord; how long wilt thou hide thy face, for ever?' Ps. xiii. 1. But then,

(2.) A legal convict is convinced of some sin, but he is also conceited that he hath some good. An evangelically convinced person is sensible he hath no good dwelling in his flesh; his conviction is more universal, the other's is more limited; a legal conviction lays a man but half dead, an evangelical lays him wholly dead; he hath no esteem of his sin, nor any of his righteousness. One is sensible of his sin, but not of his utter insufficiency to redeem his soul from everlasting death; the other sees fully what poor stuff his own righteousness is to make a saviour of. The Spirit, as it discovers the ugliness of sin, so it discovers the rottenness of that righteousness wherewith a man stilted himself up; it makes all seem as grass, and fading flowers, and

of no value. The other, like the prodigal, though he be sensible of his misery, yet he thinks to preserve himself by husks. A true convict seeth himself under the curse of the law, without ability in anything but Christ to take it off; he seeth a necessity to have Christ to deliver him, or he must be for ever bound; and Christ to raise him, or he is utterly lost; whereas the other thinks he is able to raise himself. The one thinks to repair himself out of the ruins of nature, and raise up a building of righteousness by materials of his own hewing; the other, like Job, abhors not only sin, but himself too, Job xlii. 6, and speaks not a word of that integrity he boasted of before. The one knows himself a debtor to the law, but thinks himself able to do something to content the creditor, and patch up his credit by promises of reformation; he lies down in sparks of his own kindling, wraps himself in a garment of his own weaving, thinks himself rich by conceits framed in his own mint, and fancies that he is able to silence the clamours of the law, and lick the wound of his conscience whole; as Saul thought to redeem his credit with God by the sacrifice of beasts, after he had offended in the case of Amalek: he makes self a God, and idolises his own power. This is a secret self-pride, that runs in the channel of the whole nature from Adam; and as sin is irritated by the law, so these thoughts start up by it, and make many that seemed to begin to be spiritually convinced, to end in the flesh. As sin revives by the law, so doth this pride rise up afterwards, and is the ruin of many. Hence arise those frequent excuses of men before they will come to a downright confession; whereas the other, that is evangelically convinced, is dead to his own righteousness, as well as his sin; he is sensible he hath no activity in himself, unless grace inspire him with a new principle. He performs duties, but doth not idolise them; puts forth his power to the utmost, but doth not rest in it; he seeth the emptiness of his righteousness, as well as the foulness of his sin; and thinks the one as unable to deliver him from the stroke of justice as the other to deserve it; and despairs of help and relief from the spring of nature. Paul, when a Jew, was of the same stamp with his brethren, thought to keep up his reputation with God by an external observation of the law, but when the law came in the hand of the Spirit, he died; saw not only his damnable condition, but the insecurity of his soul upon any legal foundation, and the rottenness of all his former services to bring him to heaven. Then all his natural and moral excellencies were as unvaluable as before they were amiable; they were loss in his sight. And to heighten his vile esteem of them, he added a dunghill righteousness, things of no account as to justification; yet none more holy than Paul, by a holiness derived from Christ by the Spirit after conversion, as none was more moral before by the strength of nature. Thus was he dead to the law, convinced of the vanity of any confidence in legal services; not that he might live to sin, but to God, by a new power derived from Christ, Gal. ii. 19, for he was supplied with sap from that crucified root. Now what was really the attainment of Paul, is so of every true convert, and is the desire of every evangelically convinced person. This conceit which the legalist hath of some good in himself, ariseth from the consideration of himself, compared with those that defile themselves more in sin. A sense of our own vileness, when truly convinced, ariseth from our consideration of the perfection of the law of God; for measuring ourselves with the holiness of God, we see nothing at all that bears proportion to him. Morality is but as the moon, which is glorious if compared with a candle, but faint if compared with the sun.

Thirdly, There are differences in regard of the carriage of the persons under each of these works of conviction.

(1.) Legally convinced persons snatch at comfort, though never so false; an evangelical convict looks for comfort only from the mouth of God. The one doth not kindly own the supremacy of God, and therefore makes not full and close addresses to him for healing, but seeks for shelter from every hedge, like Saul in his melancholy to music, and in his distress to the witch of Endor; like Pharaoh to his magicians, the charming pleasures of the world. He thinks, by thus being in a fool's paradise, by the pleasures of sin to choke the sense of conscience; take a receipt from any unskilful hand rather than from the physician; worldly mirth, carnal advice; or at best he runs to sermons, and fasts in hopes of remedy, catches at any passage in a sermon to ease his soul. Sometimes he endeavours to stupefy his trouble by sinful diversion; he moves hell for ease, and cries, Give me comfort, or I die! Sometimes he snatches a promise wherein he is in no manner concerned, and claps it on by a misapprehension, and so charms his trouble for a time; and in this he is assisted by the devil, who is skilful in this art, and so he makes a flower of paradise prove poison. Such wrest the Scripture to their own destruction, and to allay the storm is all they look for. Now, an evangelically convinced person, he longs for comfort from that Spirit which first impressed the sense of sin. As he was struck by the law, so he will be healed by the gospel only. He longs for joys, not of the world, but of God's salvation; his eye is fixed with Heman's only upon the God of salvation, Ps. lxxxviii. 5. He will wait God's leisure, and take nothing but what the word offers; examine well whether the word belongs to him. The Spirit makes him, like Christ, inquire into anything that is alleged, that he be not deluded by Satan's fair pretences; he longs for healing by the Sun of righteousness, that he may come and scatter the darkness he sits in. All the good opinion of men concerning him cannot give him a grain of true contentment; he is willing to do anything with the gaoler for the saving his soul—'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'—resolved to undergo the hardest conditions prescribed by the word of God; but he knows all the true spring of comfort is the blood of Christ, the covenant of grace, the promises sealed by that blood, and a sound and substantial faith in them, and till milk spout from these breasts into his mouth he will not be contented; he is for no other peace but that which is the fruit of God's lips; whereas the other is satisfied with a slight answer, warms himself by his own sparks, drinks of any puddle, so he may but quench his inflamed bowels, and regards not faith in Christ. Such coolers make men go on more resolutely in the ways of death afterwards, since they can quickly have an allay for conscience when it begins to stir. These legally convinced persons snatch at comfort though never so false.

(2.) A legally convinced person would only be freed from the pain, an evangelically convinced person from the sin, the true cause of it. Like swine, they would not have the cudgel, but they would have the mire; would have a freedom from the lash of the law, but hate to come under the yoke of Christ. They hate the iron that is come into their side, but not the crime, as a malefactor doth the gaol or a thief the gibbet. Such a one had rather have a rotten heart than a painful rack; he had rather have a putrefied soul than a deep incision. The one cries for a plaster to ease his conscience, the other for an axe to be laid to the root of his sin. He would keep his right hand and eye, provided they would not fester. The other would not have any corner of his heart inhabited by any sin; he is desirous it might lose its empire and dominion in the heart. He hath a respect to God's testimonies, though tremblings at the considerations of God: Ps. cxix. 119, 120, 'My flesh trembles for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments;'

the other, like the man possessed in the Gospel, would not have the devil tormented in him, and utters not a word to have the devil cast out of him, Luke viii. 28. He that is evangelically convinced looks forward to sin that may tempt him, and is watchful against the occasions of it; the other at best looks only backward to those already committed, and spends this disaffection he hath only on that for which he is racked; he singles out that to wreak his anger upon; he doth not fall on the troops of sin, not upon sin in general, but some particular sin which hath been painful to him; he hath no disaffection to the pleasure promised in other occasions, though he hath a distaste of the pain for that which is past. If the legalist be wrung into some reformation, it is with as much regret to part with his darling sin as David with Absalom, or Adam to be turned out of paradise. Though he forbears it, he doth not abhor it; if he abhors it, it is only the pain, not the sin; and the reason is, because there is no higher principle in such a person than fear and self-love, and to one or both of these all the reformation he hath owes its original. He is only afraid of hell, and could he enjoy sin without terror in his conscience or wrath in hell, he did not care if the glory of God were lost for him, whether ever he came at heaven or the presence of God, whether ever he had an hatred of evil or acted good; he distastes the evil only. But one that is evangelically convinced distastes the foulness of sin, relishes the excellency and beauty of holiness, because of its suitability to its Creator. Where there is fear only, there is nothing but bondage and a legal frame. The voice of one legally convinced is, How shall I do this wickedness, and open the flood-gates of wrath? The voice of an evangelical convict is this, How shall I do this wickedness, and sin against God, and spurn at his bowels?

Fourthly, There are differences in regard of the effects of these, and

(1.) A legal conviction doth not of itself soften, but rather harden; an evangelical is melting and submissive. The making a fleshy heart and disposing it to such a frame, is the incommunicable property of the covenant of grace, and was never within the verge and compass of the law. The law, like a cannon, thunders only bullets and cursing, not a word of a promise but to perfect righteousness; therefore a legal conviction cannot be attended with any melting fruit. It is like a hammer, that may break a stone in pieces, yet every part retains its hardness. After a mere legal conviction, the heart is commonly harder, as water; if it grow cold after it is heated, freezes harder than it would have done if it had retained its native cold, without the interruption of a contrary quality. All those strivings of the Spirit with the old world abated nothing of that evil figment, those evil imaginations, which lodged in the heart continually. And it is observed, that though the Israelites heard the thunder, saw the lightning, the mountain burning with fire, the blackness, darkness, and tempest, as a preparation for giving the law, which made them tremble, yet before forty days were over, they had not only forgotten that law, but they sin against that God whose power they feared, renounce God and his power over them, and make themselves a golden calf, Exod. xxxii. 1, 4. The scorching of the law makes the burned place more brawny after the fire is out. The understanding may be soundly convinced, yet the heart not melted; the one is from the undeniable evidence of truth, the other is from the kindly influence of the Spirit. But when the Spirit convinceth the heart in a spiritual method, it shines like the sun in the heavens, which thaws the cold and frozen earth, and makes a man to be as melting wax before God. Oh how immense is this love of God, that should offer me a Christ, provide a Redeemer, set him apart from all eternity for me that am self-condemned,

while I was a rebel, for me who am a firebrand of hell! O inestimable mercy! O melting goodness! O free grace! Then he calls to his heart, Down, rocky heart, down to the very dust; lie as low as hell by abasement, since Christ hath made himself so low for thee! This is always attended with humility; such a person falls down on his face and worships God, 1 Cor. xiv. 25. and with submissiveness will bear the indignation of the Lord, Micah vii. 9. And therefore a renewed man, that is past these pikes, is more humble under a sense of his own vileness than all the legalists ever were; for the Spirit keeps his foundation firm, which he first laid, whereon to build the superstructure of grace and comfort. As this sense of sin, the root, grows downward, so these noble fruits grow upward. The sense David had at his conviction for the blood of Uriah, made him startle at the numbering the people, and afraid of the water fetched from the well of Bethlehem, but he poured it out before the Lord, lest he should seem to countenance the shedding of any blood. Well, then, the legal conviction is as a brick in the kiln, burned and hardened; the other like gold, inflamed and melted, separating itself from the dross.

(2.) A legal conviction of itself tends only to destruction, evangelical to health and salvation. The law presents nothing but condemnation and ruin, and can speak no other language; its mouth is filled only with curses, without the mixture of any one blessing for degenerate man: what can be the issue of this, but confusion and endless torment? Not the least drop of comfort streams from it. It is impossible but that when it chargeth home the violation of the law, and brandisheth all its curses, self-condemnation and despair must reign in the conscience; and conscience, the deputy of God, when awakened, cannot but (like the Israelites) subscribe an *Amen* to every curse. The law, like mount Ebal, is barren of comfort; blessing grows only upon the mount of the gospel. Hence, many under sharp terrors of the law have endeavoured to make away themselves, and leaped into the flames of hell to avoid the sparks. This of itself, like poison, works to the dissolution of the temperament of the body; but evangelical is like physic, which, though it disturbs the humours, yet it tends to the preserving and rectifying the complexion of the body. And by this at last the scul is brought to such a frame that it is willing to lie under affliction and torment, yea, under the fury of devils, rather than sin against God; for fear and ingenuity in the soul join hands to the keeping of God's commandments. The one discovers the disease, the other the remedy; the one causes fear, the other hope; the one shews the plague, the other discovers the plaster; the one is like a dart in the side of a deer, that makes him run further from him that shot it, the other is as a chain to draw the soul nearer to God.

(3.) A difference in regard of duration. The legal conviction is like a convulsion fit of the earth, when it quakes and trembles, and affects all that feel it with amazement, but holds not long ere it return to its natural consistency and stability; but an evangelical conviction lasts as long as we live, and is not cast off but with the mantle of the body; then the sense of sin shall be left, and we wholly taken up with the praises of a Redeemer. Without this, grace would not grow and thrive to a due maturity.

3. Thirdly, As there is a difference between those convictions which rise from nature, and which rise from the law, so there is a difference between Satan's setting sin in order before us, and the manner of the Spirit's presenting it to us (for Satan doth sometimes set sin in order before the soul, and there is a difference between their methods). In convictions begun by the Spirit, Satan doth interest himself, and if he cannot stifle them, he endeavours to increase them. Though they are not in themselves acts of com-

fort, yet they are the act of a comforting Spirit, and in order to comfort ; but the devil impresseth them only 'as a terrifying spirit. God sometimes employs him as his officer after conversion for a correction of his people, as a beadle to discipline vagrants when they stray from their duty ; but there is a manifest difference between the impressions of guilt made by him, and those stamped by the Holy Ghost.

(1.) Satan sets sin in order as an accuser, the Spirit as a comforter. The tendency of a spiritual conviction is comfort, the intention of Satan is only to charge us with our fault. Satan, as an enemy, with violence brings his charge ; the Spirit, as a friend, with tenderness doth impress conviction upon the soul. Satan hath no mind to awaken the conscience, but would rather lull men asleep in a carnal and endless security as to this world, and not discover the danger until they feel the stroke ; he rather tempts to sin than accuseth for it, and sets men before the cannon of wrath, and giveth them no warning until they feel the bullet at their hearts, and are shattered in pieces by it. When he hath a full possession of the heart, all things are in quiet, and this great deceiver doth what he can to hinder true conviction ; and this great Pharaoh doth not double the burden until he is like to lose his prey, and is afraid the soul should be snatched out of his hands ; then he charges, as before he charmed. He chargeth violently, therefore his title is, 'The accuser of the brethren,' Rev. xii. 10. He is also diligent in it, for he doth accuse them day and night : he is no less an accuser, and a diligent accuser, of men to their own consciences. His accusations do not precede, but follow, the Spirit's conviction, to spoil the Spirit's work, and keep off the soul from coming under any other government than his own. Satan doth only accuse like a councillor at the bar, with violence doth implead the prisoner that he is counsel against, rakes up all crimes that can be found, presents them with the sharpest edge, blunts all his apologies made in his defence, giveth no direction to procure a pardon ; if the man look after any, he puts him out of hopes of obtaining. This Satan doth when he is afraid lest he should lose a man that he finds soundly convinced by the Spirit, and ready to go off from him, when other means are successless. He deals with such a soul as with Job : after God had granted him liberty to afflict him, he dispatched not one messenger with good news to him, but hastened one after another with tidings of his loss and misery. He doth rather over-accuse than under-accuse ; he is a lying spirit, and being envious too, that delights in the misery of others, he cares not what he saith to strengthen his charge. He would not speak truth to God when he accused Job, but makes a charge of hypocrisy, and a false prognostication of Job's cursing God, if he were stripped of his worldly riches, Job i. 11 and ii. 5. And he accuseth Job to his friends of more than he was guilty of ; this he doth to drive to despair. But the Spirit is a Spirit of truth ; he sets sins in order as they are, and is a Spirit of tenderness, convinceth the soul with a compassion to it. Satan deals with the soul as the thieves with the man in the Gospel, whom they left for half dead, but had no pity on his wounds. He acts quite contrary to Christ, and the Spirit of Christ in the world. When the Spirit is only a convincer, Satan will be a comforter, tells them sin shall do them no hurt, there is no cause of fear ; but when the Spirit's conviction operates kindly, and is like to be a preparation to Christ, when the Spirit begins to be a comforter, then Satan will be a convincer ; then his language is, Nothing will cure. Satan tormented men ; Christ, when he was on the earth, cured them. The Spirit, being Christ's deputy, acts as Christ did when he was here, and with the same affection as Christ did. Not but that the Spirit reproveth sharply, as Christ did upon occasion Peter

and the Pharisees, and yet, upon compliance, was as gentle as before severe. The Spirit doth accuse for sin, but doth also shew a righteousness to answer those accusations, if it be embraced.

(2.) Satan presents God only as a Judge to punish. The Spirit in the progress of conviction represents him not only as a Judge, who hath the power of punishment, but as a Sovereign and Father in Christ, who hath the power of pardon. Satan presents God upon several occasions, either armed only with fury, or covered only with a robe of mercy; one, when he would drive to despair, the other when he would settle the heart in presumption. To a soul convinced thoroughly of sin, which is upon the threshold of conversion, he represents God as the Lord of the world, calling him to account in the strictness of justice; not as the reconciler of the world in Christ, not as standing with a pen dipped in the blood of Christ to cross out his debts upon his resignation to him. He tells the soul God is a God of terror, without a mite of mercy, never shews God in all his perfections; but the Spirit, being 'the Spirit of truth,' John xvi. 13, discovers God in all his excellencies. Satan is the ruler of darkness: Eph. vi. 12, 'The ruler of the darkness of this world.' He discovers nothing but what may increase the darkness in man, like that in himself, that God is revengeful and false, not willing to make good any word of grace; not only accuseth the soul to itself, but accuseth God to the soul, and chargeth God falsely. He represents God as armed with wrath; the Spirit represents him as calmed by Christ. Satan tells the afflicted sinner only of an iron rod in God's hand; the Spirit tells the sinner of a gracious sceptre; Satan shews justice brandishing terror, and the Spirit goodness with melting bowels. Not but that the Spirit shews the justice of God in the law against sin, but it is to make way for the better welcome of the mercy of the gospel; as Joseph carries himself like a judge, sends his brethren to prison, not to keep them languishing there, but to shew the affection of a brother, with the more comfort to them, and advantage to his own designs.

(3.) Satan conceals the remedy for sin by the mercy of God; but the Spirit discovers it. The devil may aggravate the disease, but not tell us of the true medicine; the devil discovers sin as an executioner, and nothing but the sin; the Spirit, as a physician in order to a cure, discovers both the wound and the plaster, the disease and the remedy. Satan shews only fire to inflame, but he never acquaints the soul with the blood of Christ to quench that flame; he is only a fiery serpent to sting, but never directs to the brazen serpent to cure that sting. Since he knoweth that all the strength and activity to cast off his yoke lieth in the knowledge of, and closing with, Christ, he useth all arts to keep us from the knowledge of the gospel, and the gracious condescension and good will of Christ, that we might not, by becoming Christ's subjects, cease to be his slaves; therefore he uses all the power he hath, as 'the god of the world,' 2 Cor. iv. 4, to blind the eyes of men, that they may not see a spark of the light of the glorious gospel, which he doth by putting strange fancies into the hearts of men; but the conviction of the Spirit is in order to the manifestation of the things of Christ. To the convinced soul, the devil shews only the curses of the law, but the Spirit shews the promises of the gospel. The devil is an envious spirit, and since he is thrown down from heaven, veils any light that comes from thence, that men may not look that way. The Spirit's conviction is in order to the manifestation of the things of Christ: 'He shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you.' Not but that the Spirit, many times, first shews justice with a drawn sword, and mercy with a veiled face, and doth not discover the promises for a while, and entertains the soul with this language: Look upon a doleful eternity, an

unavoidable wrath, consider the easiness of utter ruin, how life and endless misery hang upon a small thread, and a puff of God can send thee among the damned ; but this is but temporary, and to make the remedy more estimable ; but the devil is always for obscuring the gospel, and flashing the law in the face of the sinner.

(4.) When Satan cannot conceal the remedy, he endeavours to disparage it, to keep the soul under terrors and a sight of sin, in opposition to that remedy. But the Spirit convinceth of the foul evil of sin, and also magnifies the excellency of the remedy provided against it. Satan would make them believe the blood of Christ is too shallow to cover the mountains of their iniquities ; the Spirit wounds to raise an esteem of the depths of that blood. Since the devil cannot conquer Christ, he will endeavour to disparage Christ, and the merit and value of his blood ; the Spirit was sent to glorify Christ, which is contrary to the devil's designs, to disparage him : John xvi. 14, ' He shall glorify me.' As Satan would wholly hide the mercy of God, so when he cannot, but that it breaks out, he extenuates the grace of the covenant, fills men full of disputes and carnal reasonings against the riches of grace, and latitude of the promise. He sets up pride in the heart, as he did in Adam, against the grace of God ; it was his old trade to make men jealous of God : the same arts he doth exercise still, with more subtilty, as being assisted with a large stock of experience since the fall. Distrust of God was that he tempted Adam to, and Christ himself, putting the thing to an *If*, ' *If thou art the Son of God.*' Satan presseth upon them their sin, as unpardonable ; at first, to encourage security, he tells them sin is so small that justice will not regard it, and afterwards so great that mercy cannot forgive it, that they are past the limits of grace, that the candle of their lives will not burn long enough for a true repentance ; but the Spirit never acquaints the soul with any such news ; for this is against the nature of the gospel, this is to bely the terms and tenor of it, for he always proposeth the gospel in its true terms of faith and repentance. He shews sin in its ugly colours, as an object of justice, while it is cherished, and the sinner as an object of mercy in the gospel, when repenting. The Spirit presseth it as a duty to believe, Satan presseth it upon their consciences that they ought not to believe, that swine must not meddle with pearls, nor dogs with jewels, that to believe is to presume, that they provoke God in closing with mercy, before they have a fitness for it. Such things are the language of many under troubles, when Satan puts his finger into them, and by this means keeps men off in a sight of sin, from closing with the promise. If a promise appears, Satan darkens it ; if the soul cometh to close with it, Satan endeavours to beat off their fingers, and tells them they have not, nor are ever like to have, qualifications for the promise ; but the Spirit is sent on the same errand that Christ came on, to manifest the name of God, the freeness of his mercy, and that the gospel is as large in blessings to penitents and believers, as the law is in curses to impenitents and infidels, and clears up the things which are freely given us of God, gospel grace and favour, gospel promises. These are ' the things freely given us of God,' 1 Cor. ii. 12. But if the soul, like Joshua, doth look towards the angel of the Lord, Satan will be at hand to turn away his eyes from him, Zech. iii. 1.

(5.) The devil always, in setting sin before the soul, endeavours to drive it to despair, the Spirit to encourage it to faith ; the one to sink it in despair of pardon, the other to excite it to a mourning for sin. Satan would drive it to blasphemy, like those, Rev. xvi. 11, that ' blasphemed the God of heaven by reason of their pains, and repented not of their deeds.' But the Spirit instructs with the conviction, teaching us to justify God, and condemn our-

selves, to quell our murmurings, and justify God's procedure, and make us submissive to God's righteous judgment. Satan discovers sin, to drive the soul to a worse sin than that which he hath discovered, and set the soul more at variance with God. Satan is an evil spirit, and is 'a roaring lion, going about to devour,' 1 Pet. v. 8. The Spirit seeks to support, and discovers sin, to make men humble before God, and to have good thoughts of God's tenderness. The language of the Spirit is, thy case is desperate in itself, but there is balm in Gilead, there is eye-salve. The language of the devil is, God hath forsaken thee, as to Saul, who thereupon slew himself on his own sword; as he spurred Judas to sin after self-conviction, so he hurried him as fast to the halter, thence to hell. Thus he endeavoured to engage Job in an open hostility against God, and spared no way to gall him, and move him to so cursed a rebellion. When such motions are found by any persons lying under a sense of sin, and wrath due to it, they may conclude them not to be any touches of the Holy Spirit, who, being a Spirit of holiness, can never stir up such sinful motions. Satan hath a great advantage to this end, to drive to despair, from the guilt of our consciences; and an advantage to accuse us, from the darkness and ignorance of our hearts, and unacquaintedness with the largeness and extent of the gospel. He is also skilful in all the terrible threatenings of God in the word; he hath read them all over, and draws what darts out of that quiver he pleases to answer that end. He can open the fountain below, the spring of our sin, the window above, the streaming of justice, and cause a deluge of despair; and, being a perfect hater of God, he endeavours to imprint upon men the same disposition. Whereas, the Spirit being love, and acts of love principally ascribed to him, aims at the drawing the soul to such a frame of love, and opens our sin to make us despair in ourselves, and the treasures of the gospel, to make us run to God with open arms, shews the greatness of sin, and also the attainableness of mercy, upon our return and repentance. The Spirit being sent as a comforter, his principal intent is, not to terrify, but that he may lay more lasting and stronger foundations for comfort; and, being a wooer and solicitor for Christ, when he tells us of our misery by our match with sin, it is not like Satan, to make our union straiter, but to break it off, and bless us with a better; and therefore, when he shews the ugliness and misery of sin, it is to raise our esteem of Christ, and promote our acceptance of him.

(6.) Satan works violently and suddenly in this case, and most by the passions and humours of the body, rather than by reason; but the Spirit works upon the mind, therefore he is an enlightening Spirit. Satan works upon the reason by the passion, the Spirit upon the passion by the reason; he first enlightens the mind, and brings light into the heart, and the rational faculties, the proper subjects of light, and by this means winds up the passions to what pitch and tune he thinks fit. Satan first works upon the humours of the body, as melancholy, and the like. Satan works violently, as upon passion, as he buffeted Paul; boxes a man to and fro, so that he hath no time to do anything but consider his misery: whereas the Spirit proposeth the object, helps the soul to consider, and by degrees leads to a further knowledge of the light of the gospel, from a glimmering to a shining light, until the knowledge of the Lord break in in its full glory. The Spirit also is more particular in his convictions, as acting omnisciently, which Satan being a creature cannot do; who cannot discern all sins, but guesses at some thoughts and actions, and therefore his setting sin before men is more confused. The Spirit's setting sin before men is more particular and orderly; but in the whole, Satan acts as a convincer only, the Spirit as a convincer and comforter: one aims at terror and despair, the other at comfort and faith.

VI. The application.

Use 1. Of Information. If the Spirit of Christ be the author of conviction of sin ; if this is the order God proceeds in, then,

First, The gospel doth not destroy reason and rational proceeding. It is agreeable to common reason, that old principles should be exploded, and appear unworthy, base, unreasonable, and weak, before new ones be introduced and entertained. The working of the Spirit is according to the nature of man, moves not in contradiction unto, but in an elevation of reason ; he explodeth principles, which were planted in the mind before, and discovers principles which reason cannot disown, though it did not before apprehend ; he doth not extinguish reason, the candle of the Lord, but snuffs it, and adds more light, reduces it to its proper manner of operation, and sets it in its right state towards God ; brings fresh light into the understanding, and new motions into the will. He doth not dethrone reason and judgment, but apply it to its proper work, repair it, sets it in its true motion ; as mending a watch is not to destroy it, but rectify that which is out of order, and restore it to its true end. Religion is not the destruction, but the restoration, of reason. The arguments the Spirit useth are suited to the reason of men, otherwise conscience could not be moved, for conscience follows judgment : it is not an act of judgment, but imagination, that reason doth not precede. As the service God requires is a rational service, so the method he uses in conversion is a rational method.

Secondly, We may from this doctrine see the excellency of the gospel state. The foundation of it is laid by the Son of God ; the application of it, and the preparations to that application, are wrought by the Spirit of God. The whole Trinity concern themselves in man's recovery : the Father contrives it, the Son lays the foundation of it in his blood, the Spirit prepareth the soul for the participation of it. The Father shews the evil of sin, by making his Son a sacrifice for it ; the Son acknowledgeth the demerit of sin, by consenting to his own expiatory death ; the Spirit bears witness against the evil of it, by discovering to us the filthiness of its nature, 'For when he is come,' 'the Comforter whom I will send,' John xv. 26, 'he shall testify of me,' saith Christ. The Spirit doth it as the fruit of Christ's purchase, and gift of Christ's royalty ; he breaks the rock, subdues the heart, fills it with the bitterness of sin, that it may taste of the sweetness of grace ; he shakes the rod of damnation over men, to make them fly to a golden sceptre held out to relieve them. The first covenant spake terror only, and spake no more comfort to men than devils, sealed them up to destruction, without one spark of light to shew the way of salvation ; but the Spirit in the gospel giveth us light to see our misery, but in order to our apprehension of the remedy ; he makes us know our state, that we may know our Saviour ; he fills men with trembling and amazement in a way of grace, for his service ; not in a way of judgment, as a preparation to their down-lying in eternal flames. God hath provided an agent to do that, which Christ by reason of his flesh was not so likely to do. The garb wherein Christ appeared offended the world ; it was incredible to man that God should send his Son in so mean a condition. From this the world drew pretences for their unbelief, but the glorious appearance of the Spirit cuts off all these pretences. Man can have no excuse from the convictions the Spirit makes. This seems to be part of the expediency of Christ's departure, that the Spirit might convince.

Thirdly, All convictions and convincing discourses must not be exploded as legal ; they are the work of the Spirit, as the royal gift of Christ, and the fruit of Christ's ascension ; nay, the first work of the Spirit as a comforter,

a fruit of the promise of the Spirit as carrying on the design of Christ. The convictions of the Spirit are no more legal, than the blood of Christ a legal blood, the priesthood of Christ a legal priesthood, the offices of Christ legal offices. The works of the Spirit, in what way soever, are evangelical in their end, since the foundation on which they are built is a gospel foundation.

Fourthly, We see the mighty power and excellency of the word in the hand of the Spirit. The Spirit is the author of conviction, not immediately, without the proposing any object, but in and by the word. The Spirit, like Christ to the woman of Samaria, discovers 'all that she had done,' John iv. 29. The word in this hand is a hammer to break the hardest rock, a fire to melt and devour the compactedest metals, a spirit to enter through the closest bars, a rod to smite the stoutest sinner, a breath to slay the highest wickedness. It makes men to assent to what they loathed, sets them on fire, though they use all their arts to quench it, Rev. xi. 10. It doth torment those that dwell on the earth, while they are in an earthly and carnal frame. The holiness of the word is evidenced, in shewing us the filthiness of our souls; the power of the word manifested, in pulling down that which exalts itself, though it be never so strong a hold; the divine authority is manifest, in revealing the secrets of the heart, though lying hid, not only from the eyes of the world, but also from the present knowledge of the soul itself, 1 Cor. xiv. 24. Like the sun, nothing is hid from the light and force thereof; it edgeth a man's conscience, sets him a-trembling, because it is the voice of the Lord. When the Spirit fastens it on the soul, it will make the highest mountain to shake, the heart of an incarnate devil to tremble; put such a cup of amazement in the hands of a sinner, that all the pleasures of sin shall not put the taste out of his; it will make a prince come down from a throne, let fall his sceptre; make David throw his crown from his head, and Ahab change his purple into sackcloth, and the jailer spring in trembling before his prisoners. Wonder not at this powerful effect, since the word is managed by the hand of the Spirit.

Fifthly, If the Spirit be the author of conviction, how weak then are all means of themselves, till the Spirit set them home upon the conscience! Could nature thoroughly convince, what need of the Spirit? Threatenings will not savingly affright, nor promises powerfully allure, without the power of the Holy Ghost to imprint them. A man may read them ten thousand times over, and have no full reflection upon himself, as concerned in them, without the operation of this mighty arm. All the Jewish sacrifices were too feeble to expiate sin without the death of Christ; all the powers in the world are too weak to convince of sin without the arm of the Spirit. How foolish is it for man to depend upon his own resolution, to think the sense of sin necessary, and yet put it off until another day, when this sense is not in his own power, but at the Spirit's pleasure, and there is as much need of the Spirit to touch us with a sense of sin, as of the angel's descent to move the waters, to the bestowing of health!

Sixthly, If the Spirit be the author of conviction, we may hereby judge of the motions of the Spirit, and distinguish them from motions from other causes. The Spirit never moves to sin, or anything that appears sinful. That Spirit which is to display sin in its black colours, in order to conviction, can never solicit to the embraces of it, in order to damnation; that Spirit which shews sin in its hellish shape, can never invite the soul to espouse deformity. He that is sent to convince of it, can never be so false to his office as to daub with it. Impure breathings are not the issues of a Spirit of holiness; injuries and falsities against God never take their rise from a Spirit of truth. Whatsoever therefore hath a tincture of sin, what-

soever is *per se* an occasion of sin, can never come from the Spirit of God, let what revelation soever be pretended; especially whatsoever disparageth Christ in his undertaking, in the glory of any of his offices, and the honour of God by him, this receives no encouragement at all from the Spirit, whose employment it is to reprove for unbelief, and whatsoever shelters itself under the wings of it. He is Christ's deputy, and will not infringe the main end of Christ, which was to set up holiness and pull down sin. The Spirit cannot move to anything that destroys the foundation of Christ's gospel.

Seventhly, If the Spirit be the author of the conviction of sin, we see then who is the great author of stifling convictions, and hindering them from coming to a good issue. It must be something contrary to the Spirit of God; who is that but Satan? It is a character of a child of the devil to be an 'enemy to all righteousness,' Acts xiii. 10; much more is the devil, the father of that child, an enemy to all righteousness. And thus said Paul to Elymas when he withstood the apostle, and endeavoured to divert Paulus Sergius from entertaining the word. The devil hath no such enemy in the heart of man as faith, because this brings the soul from under his power, to be subject to another head; he sets his strength against the plantation of it, and likewise against the preparation for it. His design is against righteousness and holiness. He first assaulted the righteousness of Adam's nature in paradise, and endeavours to prevent any restoration of righteousness to the soul, by keeping men off from the means of it, raising the spirit of persecution against it, instilling into men false imaginations of the unpleasantness of it, the pleasures of sin, and the easiness of a deathbed repentance, and stifling convictions, which are the first step to happiness. He finds corrupt principles in men, which he arms against the attempts of the Spirit. The Spirit first convinceth of sin, and then of righteousness. The devil goes quite contrary: first he endeavours to convince of a false righteousness, and, when that will not prevail, then he convinceth of sin. When he cannot prevent a sinner's seeing sin in its deformity, then he will endeavour to hinder him from seeing grace in its beauty and lustre. When the sinner is impenitent, he represents God as stripped of his justice, that he may not fear. When conscience is soundly stirred, he labours to render it fruitless, and stop the torrent of conviction; strips God of his mercy, that he may increase the man's fears; he tells him his former sins are swelled above mercy. He tells the bold sinner that he hath a righteousness, and that God hath no arrows in store for him; he tells the troubled sinner that he hath nothing but sin, and that God hath no bowels reserved for him. He always contradicts the method of the Spirit of God, and still is, what he was from the beginning, a liar; he endeavours to comfort when the Spirit troubles, and troubles when the Spirit comforts; he will speak peace when God cries guilt, and cries guilt when the Spirit cries peace; he is all for the gospel when the Spirit handles the law, and is all for law when the Spirit utters the gospel. Hence he hath his 'fiery darts,' that is, the fear of death and damnation by reason of sin and imperfect obedience, which he suggests to the conscience, Eph. vi. 16. Thus he walks contrary to the Spirit of God. You see then who is the author of stifling conviction.

Eighthly, If the Spirit of God be the author of conviction, how sinful is it then to resist the convictions of the Spirit! It is a new and worse rebellion added to all the former, more immediately against God, and offering violence to the Spirit, and in some degree a doing despite to the Spirit of grace, by whose influence convictions are made. It is something above a sin against mere knowledge, because it is against the present dictates of the Holy Ghost, a depriving him, as much as a man may, of a great part of his

office, and consequently of all, because he cannot be a comforter unless he be first a convincer. The Spirit shews a readiness for your cure, and it is a more than ordinary provocation to slight a physician when he stands ready with his medicines. It is a justification of ourselves in the face of God, and of all those sins we have committed, when we will not regard anything that God saith against them; it is to be the devil's second in his war against God and our souls.

II. If the Spirit of God be the author of conviction, it affords a use of comfort. It being the peculiar work of the Spirit, it is a mighty comfort to them that comply with the operations of the Spirit, listen to these convictions, and do admit them to take possession of the soul.

First, It is a matter of comfort that the Spirit should take upon him this office of curing us, that he will condescend to be a chirurgeon to so many putrefied souls, deals with them in the word, and employs his lance to let out the corrupt matter; that he will vouchsafe to bring the law and our consciences, the gospel and our hearts, together. The blessed Jesus submitted to be a sacrifice that he might be our righteousness; the Spirit undertakes to be our instructor that he might be our comforter, and stirs up the mud in our consciences that is so loathsome in itself. The Spirit might have stood aloof of, and left us and our sins to nuzzle together, without troubling himself about our state.

Secondly, The convictions of the Spirit will have a good issue, if they be not resisted. You need not fear a lance in the hands of love and tenderness. He is God's agent, Christ's deputy, to rescue you. He hews not those that submit to him for the fire, but for the building; he cuts that he may heal, burns that he may cure; he is only to open the passage into your hearts, to let in some of the blood from the pierced heart of Christ. As wars in the world go before the end of all things, so convictions and tumults in the soul are the presages of an approaching redemption. There is good hopes, since he is entered upon the first part of his work, the conviction of sin, that it will not be long ere he proceeds to the second, which is the conviction of righteousness. If the Spirit did not intend your good, he would never have pressed so hard upon you at any time, never given a heart to comply, but have left you blind in your sins till destruction had seized upon you, and hurried you to perpetual imprisonment. But though now you are prisoners it is a comfort, because you are prisoners of hope. The Spirit wounds, and wounded souls are the fittest objects for compassion. The sight of sin must precede the purging of it, and then the fruit of it is true consolation. Isa. lxvi. 1, God dwells 'with the humble and contrite spirit;' not *I will dwell*, but *I dwell*; I dwell there when I wound and bruise, but the end of my dwelling there is not principally to bruise, but 'to revive the spirit of the humble.' The Spirit is Christ's deputy, therefore doth nothing but pursuant to Christ's office, and that is, to turn a 'spirit of heaviness' into the 'garment of praise,' Isa. lxi. 1. He came 'to seek and save them that were lost,' to bind up that which was broken, and strengthen that which was sick, and deliver them from their destruction, Ezek. xxxiv. 12, 16, 'in a cloudy and dark day.' Such a temper was our Redeemer of when God entrusted him; such a temper is the Spirit of. Our Redeemer would not have sent one of a different nature from himself; the same nature is in all the three persons; they are one in nature, one in affection, one in design of the salvation of man. What though the troubles of any man may be grievous at present, and he may be like a hart hunted and standing at a bay, at a loss what course to take! It is no ground of discouragement. When our sins were set home upon our Redeemer, they put him to a stand: John xii. 27, 'What shall I say?' Yet the issue was

glorious to God and himself, and to poor souls. The Spirit will deal no otherwise with the members than God with the Head.

III. Use of exhortation. If the Spirit be the author of conviction, the First exhortation is to those who have been convinced by the Spirit.

(1.) Be thankful to God. It is a matter of praise that God hath driven you to him, though with sharp lashes, and a greater matter of praise if he drew you only with cords of love. That God should employ his Spirit to be his solicitor to sinners; that he left you not to find out the filthiness and danger of your state by your own blind eyes. You have had fairer draughts of his power and goodness. When you were under troubles, did you ever think the mountains would have been removed? did you ever think comfort would have dawned on you? Since any of you have received light, you see the blessed skill and power of the Spirit; you were 'brought low, and he helped you,' Ps. cxvi. 6; bless your strong deliverer; bless that skilful chirurgeon that cured though he lanced. When Peter was brought out of man's prison, he considered it with great astonishment; much more consideration is due when we are brought out of God's prison, Ps. xlii. 6. It was God's counsel in your reins, though sharp like the pain of the stone, bless him for it. He hath given you but a drop of hell, when he might have shot all his granadoes into you, and at last have shot you out of his sling into hell. He hath brought you from prison that he might bring you to a throne of grace, and give you a pardon.

(2.) Compassionate others, and assist the Spirit, when you find him at work upon others, in such a condition. By this we become like Christ, who learned pity to us by experience of our infirmities; and we should learn it to others, by reflection on what we felt ourselves. To quench smoking flax is to be unlike our Saviour, and thwart the work of the Spirit; kindle it, therefore, into a quicker flame by your breath. Nothing so tender as an afflicted conscience, which therefore must be tenderly dealt with. Rake not in the wounds of any that are afflicted for sin; to help forward affliction will be as little pleasing to God in spiritual as temporal troubles. The Spirit acts in this office as a comforter, and the comforts you have had are for others as well as yourselves: 2 Cor. i. 4, 'Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comforts wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.' Pour in, therefore, balm, and not vinegar.

(3.) Take heed of offending and quenching the Spirit. Let not new sins make the Spirit take his old sword into his hand; the second wound will be worse than the first. Love enraged strikes more keenly. David had more sharp terrors after his fall into the sins of murder and adultery than any time before that we read of. Anguish and terror will fall on the doers of iniquity, to the Jew, the professing party, as well as to the Gentiles, Rom. ii. 9, 10, but glory and peace, spiritual communications of divine goodness, and an unspotted joy, attend the doing good. If you would avoid wounds of conscience, avoid sins which grieve the Spirit. Conscience, that checks men for acts of a sensual life, even for those that are more generous, never checks the soul for its aspiring upward, and attempts toward a closer communion with God. Peace is the 'effect of righteousness,' Isa. xxxii. 17; the loving God's law affords great peace, peace in abundance, Ps. cxix. 165. Peace can then only be as the river, when our righteousness is as the waves of the sea; therefore quench not that Spirit that hath convinced you, and do not by new sins drive him away.

(4.) Exercise faith much. Faith was first acted by you before you were

brought from under those pressures you felt ; it must be still acted for keeping them from returning on you. Faith was the medicine that cured your wounds, and faith is the only antidote to prevent new ones ; faith acted will make your inherent righteousness more vigorous, and the more holiness the more peace. Christ constantly in the eye will make Christ formed in the heart thrive and rejoice.

Secondly, The second branch of the exhortation is to those who are under convictions for sin. If there be any that at present are under conviction for sin,

(1.) Murmur not against God. It is the Spirit's work ; murmur not, therefore, against him ; let not your hearts fret within you while the Spirit is raking up the mud to make you view it ; let there be no breakings out of impatience whereby to quench the Spirit. Murmuring is the way to lose the possession of our souls and the expectation of our comforts. Deal not with God as Job's wife would have had him to have done, ' Curse God, and die,' Job ii. 9. Tumultuousness of spirit against God is a diabolical temper, a resemblance to that of the damned, who blaspheme God under their torments, and curse God when sin gnaws their conscience. To lie patient under the Spirit's hand is a Christ-like frame, who uttered not a word against his Father, when the sins of all the world were laid upon him to bear the punishment of them. Speak well of God, and as bad of the loathsomeness of your hearts as the Spirit himself doth. This is a holy compliance. To hinder pettishness, consider God as a sovereign who hath power over you, and as a gracious sovereign who hath an affection for a man under his rebukes ; represent him to yourselves, not only in his severity, but in his mercy also, laying the foundation deep that he may make the building more strong, beautiful, and lasting. Murmur not, unless you had rather remain in league with the devil than have the band broken.

(2.) Run to the same hand for healing which wounded you. The wounds of the Spirit may sometimes be skinned over by other helps, and left inwardly rankling, but they can be cured only by the same hand that made them : Isa. lvii. 17, 18, ' For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him : I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly, in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him ; I will lead him also, and restore comforts to him, and unto his mourners.' It is the sense of God's wrath, the forfeiture of his favour, and the sinful distance man stands in from God, which chiefly chargeth the soul ; the taking off his wrath, the beaming of his favour, filling up the gulf between God and the soul, belong only to God. The longing of a woman cannot be satisfied with the most delicious fruit if she hath not the very thing she longs for, but there will be indelible characters printed upon the fetus. Since our natural blindness by the fall, we are not able to find out truth, there is need of his Spirit to enlighten and guide us ; hence is he called the Spirit of truth. And since sin raiseth storms in the conscience, which no wit of mere nature or strength of reason can compose, there is need of the Spirit to silence the storms of conscience ; hence he is called a comforter, to dispel them. As you are wounded by the Spirit in the word, so look for cure from the Spirit in the word. Nathan had assured David of a pardon by God's order ; David would expect the joy of it only from God by his Spirit : Ps. li. 12, ' Restore to me the joy of thy salvation.' Though he had an assurance from Nathan of a pardon, he would have it also from the Spirit of God. If the Spirit be silent, no other voice can be musical ; give God, therefore, the honour of his own prerogative. The key of peace is held in the hand of God, not in the mouth of the creature ; peace is contained in the cabinet of the word,

and God only can unlock it; it is an effect of God's creating power, Isa. lvii. 19. Since the conquest sin hath made of us, the heart is but a tempestuous place; there is always matter for storms, as in the world for exhalations; when they are raised, only Christ by his Spirit can say to the waves, 'Be still.' Spiritual storms will obey no other voice. Till you find anything in the world that can equal God in a creative omnipotency, expect no peace from it; sin must be removed before peace can be settled. Only the blood of Christ can stop the mouth of conscience, and none but the Spirit can drop it into the conscience. The application of it is only by the Spirit, as the offering it on the cross was by him. But it must not be in a way of enthusiastic expectation. As he wounded you in the word, so he will heal you by the word also. He is faithful to Christ that sent him, and takes of his to shew it to us, that is, of his truths; he takes his healing herbs out of no other garden. Though peace be the fruit of a creative power, yet it is the fruit of the lips. And the Thessalonians received the 'joy of the Holy Ghost' by receiving the word,' 1 Thess. i. 6.

Thirdly, Have recourse to Christ's atonement. Troubles of spirit are the arraignment and indictment of the soul before God. It is by Jesus Christ only, in whom God hath writ all the characters of his mercy, that we can be freed from the danger. In him you will see a wrathful justice appeased, and a provoked God reconciled. It is this blood only that quenches the fury of God and the fire of conscience; it is by his blood only we are justified, and by this blood only can we be pacified. An infinite wrath you fear, an infinite satisfaction must expel your fears; that that quenches the fire of conscience, must be water from the well of salvation. There are two things trouble a convinced sinner, the sight of guilt and the weakness of righteousness. He sees himself much in debt, and nothing to satisfy, is sensible he is come short of the glory of God, that the righteousness of God will bar heaven against his unrighteousness. He must then go to Christ to pay his debt, and impart his righteousness. When David found iniquity prevailing, he had recourse to this, Ps. lxx. 3. Christ is a physician for the sick, a saviour for the lost, a redeemer for the captives, a refiner for the filthy, a surety for the debtor, and a priest for the sensible sinner. In him we may see both our weakness and our remedy; his riches will make us sensible of our poverty, his fulness of our emptiness, his medicines of our sickness, his ransom of our bondage, his glory of our misery. This is the way to make a legal conviction commence evangelical.

Fourthly, Those that are under conviction should wait upon God for a good issue. Be not too hasty to break prison, but stay God's leisure; call upon him, and he will be near you in a way of grace, though not immediately in a way of comfort. 'The Lord is nigh to all them that call upon him in truth,' Ps. xlv. 18. It is not for want of means that God doth not presently comfort; he hath endless comforts by him, but he stays for a fit season, that he may come with double love, for his own glory and his creatures' advantage; as Christ deferred the raising Lazarus till certainly dead, that the miracle of his resurrection might be indisputable, and his glory in raising him more illustrious. God leaves men under a cloud to exercise their faith, which many times is most strong where there is least feeling, otherwise it would not be faith but sense that would make us come to him by prayer; he keeps the day dark that we may fly to him in prayer, which we should not regard had we comforts at pleasure. Hannah's soul must be poured out in tears before she can have the desire of her heart. God keeps us under matter of prayer, before he giveth us matter of praise, that we may praise him with higher strains: 'He that hath torn will heal, he that hath smitten will bind

up,' Hosea vi. 1. Exercise what little faith there is in such a case, Christ did so in his agony : ' He offered up strong cries and prayers to him that was able to save him from death.' God will knock off your fetters in time, when the soul finds the greatest need, and is in the fittest posture to glorify him : Ps. l. 15, ' Call upon me in a day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me ;' implying that God will deliver at such a time when there is the greatest occasion to glorify him ; when you are most humble, he will hear your cry, 2 Chron. vii. 14.

Fifthly, All the time of your waiting for the taking off your trouble which may be upon your spirit, desire cleansing as well as comforting grace. To desire only comfort is more selfish, to desire purging is an aim more at the glory of God, who cannot be honoured without holiness. David put up more prayers for purging than pardoning-mercy. The waters that proceed from the throne of the Lamb are not only refreshing and cooling, but also purging and cleansing. A divine nature is necessary to a divine peace ; cordials are not so necessary, but may be dangerous, when the humours are strong ; purging is then more needful. The comforting Spirit is first a Spirit of holiness, and Christ is Melchizedek, a king of righteousness, before a king of peace. Besides, restoratives are best when purgatives have gone before. Now because men are apt to run to wrong means, and take ways of stupefying rather than rightly appeasing conscience, it will not be amiss to give some directions to avoid this rock on which some split. Man is so full of enmity against God, that he takes hold of what first comes to hand, and would rather gather ease from any thing than go to a mediator of God's appointment. A sense of sin is always attended with a look after a remedy : O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me ? Take heed of some things in such a case :

(1.) Take heed of false opinions. As the word is the instrument of comfort, so the truth upon which comfort is founded must be tried by the word. The Spirit must take of Christ's, the truths of Christ, and shew it to us : ' The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart ; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes,' Ps. xix. 8. Poison may be fair to the eye, and delightful to the palate, but hurtful to the life. Men in distress of spirit are apt to catch at every rotten plank, like men ready to be drowned. Puddle-water will be swallowed down in extremity, as eagerly as the juice of a delicious grape ; the appetite desiring something to cool the bowels, considers only what may give it some refreshment. False judgments either of the disease or of the proper remedy are equally dangerous. In this case men are like sick persons, that ask advice of every friend, scrape up many remedies, but never go to a skilful physician. Take heed of false opinions.

(2.) Take heed of carnal counsel in such a case. For if the Spirit be the author of conviction, cleaving to any carnal counsel is turning the back upon the Spirit. Flesh and blood are bad counsellors in this affair, they will consult their own ease and seek their own satisfaction ; to consult with them is to disobey God, Gal. i. 6. Christ would not suffer one that desired to be his disciple to turn back, and take leave of his friends, which was but an act of civility, Luke ix. 61 ; perhaps, because by them he might have been diverted from his religious resolution, and his answer to him intimates as much : ver. 62, ' No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.' Unbelieving hearts, unbelieving friends are the worst counsellors in the world, and the most miserable comforters, their counsels are the devil's delight and the Spirit's grief. Such will quench not only the fire in the conscience, but the Spirit too that kindled it, and

cause him to depart. The best way in this case is, to have the counsel of the wicked far from you, Job xxi. 16.

(3.) Our own righteousness and a road of formal services is to be taken heed of. In this case our own righteousness is so far from being a means to ease us, that it is a bar to true peace, by keeping us from that righteousness that can only purchase it, and only effect it in us. Pride was the cause of our ruin in Adam, and what was the cause of our ruin cannot be our remedy. This temper manifests the heart to be full of the proud pharisee's, an enemy to Christ, for it grudges him the title of a Saviour. An imperfect righteousness cannot afford a perfect peace; the righteousness of a sinful nature is not the righteousness of a pure law; a thorough conviction throws away a man's righteousness as well as his sin, in point of justification and in point of consolation; and to expect peace from a road of formal duties is to trust in the arm of flesh. Paul calls all things so when he opposed 'rejoicing in the flesh' to 'rejoicing in Christ,' Philip. iii. 3. By flesh he means all things different from Christ, and to go to a creature is to depart from the Lord. Take heed therefore of valuing your own tears in the room of Christ's blood, your own petitions in the room of his intercessions, and applauding yourselves in a vain righteousness, instead of the meritorious satisfaction of the blood of God, as though a few good duties could expiate a multitude of sins. What are a few tears but a drop to the sea of our guilt? What are our petitions but as the breath of a child to the storms of our provocations? our righteousness but as a mite to the many talents of our unrighteousness? Sinful duties cannot make an infinite and holy satisfaction. As these were not our saviour, so they cannot be our comforter; they have no blood to shed for us, and therefore have no power to heal us.

(4.) Take heed of carnal contentments and sensual pleasures. Saul called for music to drive away the evil spirit; so do some for sensual delights, to drive away the Holy Spirit; set up projects in the world to avoid the noise in their own consciences; and sometimes sinful merriments to expel the good Spirit by an impure devil, is as if a man should endeavour to quench fire with burning pitch, or cure the gout by a stab at the heart. Thus men use all arts to stifle convictions, but the end of their mirth is heaviness, Prov. xiv. 13. What creature can cure the wound that God makes? What can comfort when the Almighty troubles? All carnal contentments can no more remove inward and spiritual distempers than a crown can cure the headache, or a golden slipper the pain of the gout. Therefore, go to none of these things, but run to that hand which did wound you, unto the Spirit of God, who is the author of conviction. The

Third exhortation, to those who are desirous to have spiritual conviction; to be convinced of sin.

First, Desire the Spirit to pull the scales from your eyes which Satan hath put on; beg of God, 'What I see not, teach thou me;' desire him to lead you into the seminary of corruption, and cause you to possess your sins, till you cry out, Guilty, guilty; to see them in their filthiness, not as a dunghill in a picture, but as a real dunghill, offending a delicate smell. This course Job took, Job xiii. 23, when he considered the multitude of his sins: 'Make me to know my iniquity and my sin,' not only with a simple but sensible knowledge.

Secondly, Meditate much upon the sense Christ had of sin. Consider how his understanding was enlarged to the highest pitch of knowledge; not a grain of malice or ingratitude in the bowels of sin but was within the compass of his apprehension. He understood the holiness of that God that was offended with sin. Conceive Christ in his agonies; consider how much sin hath dis-

pleased and injured God, sunk and ruined the soul, and this may be some assistance, by the means of the Spirit, for gaining a spiritual conviction. A spiritual sense Christ had, and the consideration of him and imitation of him is the way for us to have a spiritual sense of sin.

Thirdly, Study the law in its spiritual meaning, and in the extent of it. Paul apprehended the law in its spirituality, which before he understood according to the pharisaical interpretation, which dulled its edge in its operations.

Fourthly, Set every doctrine you know home upon your conscience. There is a double knowledge, dogmatical and affectionate. We may know many things that do not affect us; we may be affectedly ignorant, when we are dogmatically knowing. Paul knew the law by the means of Gamaliel, at whose feet he sat, but had no sense of it, till Christ came and brought the sense of it from his head to his heart.

Fifthly, Attend upon the means. God will honour the word with convincing men of sin, even of those sins which the light of nature would manifest: as David of murder and adultery, which God would convince him of by the prophet.

Sixthly, Suppress not any convictions when they flash in upon you; let them have their perfect work. Cherish every conviction the Spirit fastens upon you while it is warm upon your affections. It is dangerous to suppress it. The Spirit's operations will not be fruitless; it will end in a full conviction, or in a curse. If the Spirit hath invited himself, and hath been refused to be a physician, he may leave you remediless; he may have no more hand to knock, but dust to shake off from his feet, as a token of his final leaving you. And wait upon God in the use of means; it is there that the Spirit doth breathe; it is by the word he doth convince, as well as by the word he doth comfort.

A DISCOURSE OF UNBELIEF, PROVING IT IS THE GREATEST SIN.

Of sin, because they believe not on me.—JOHN XVI. 9.

THERE were two observations in this text :

1. The Spirit is the author of conviction of sin.
2. Unbelief is a sin of the greatest malignity against God.

For the second,

Of sin. Not of *sins*, but *sin*. The Spirit convinceth of all sins, but chiefly of a state of sin, of unbelief.

First, As the fountain of all sin. It was the first sin of Adam. Not unbelief of a mediator, but the not giving credit to the precept of God, and the reality of God's intention in commanding. There was a jealousy that God had not dealt sincerely and plainly with him in the precept, as if he thought the prohibition was not so much an act of his sovereignty, as an act of his envy. It was the cause also of all the sin that grew up to such maturity in the old world ; they had not faith in that first promise made to Adam, and without question transmitted by him to his posterity. The faith of Abel is applauded, Heb. xi. 4 ; consequently the unbelief of Cain, the head of the wicked world, is marked. If Abel's sacrifice was more excellent in regard of his faith, Cain's was more vile in regard of his unbelief.* The apostle, shewing that faith makes the difference between the godly and the wicked, begins his discourse with the two examples of faith and unbelief in those brothers. Abel's faith seems to be thus in his offering: 1. He considered his own sin transferred upon that innocent victim, thereby understanding the demerit of his sin, as deserving wrath and death for it. 2. He considered that this sacrifice, being the blood of a beast, could not take away sin ; but that it was typical of the Lamb promised, upon which his sins were to be transferred, and to whom they were to be imputed, and accordingly acted faith on that promise of the seed, and desired God not to impute his sins to him, but to that Lamb which was to be slain ; and this the very nature of his sacrifice, being bloody, and the character the apostle gives of his faith, intimates. Cain had not faith in the promised seed ; he brings an offering to God of the fruits of the ground, not a bloody sacrifice, whereby he might signify the acknowledgment of his own desert, and his reliance

* Illyric. in loc.

on that Lamb of God whose heel was to be bruised, who was to be made an offering. The kinds of their sacrifices imply two different conceits in them. Cain's seems to be only a present to acknowledge God the author of the good things he had, at the best, or to oblige God rather; for the ground of all his wrath was, because God did not respect his offering, did not testify a well-pleasement with it. His offering was no signification of his sin, nor a type of the promised seed; he owned God as creator, not as redeemer.* Cain and his posterity, which infected the old world, disregarded that promise of the seed of the woman, slighted the offers made in it, and resisted the strivings of the Spirit with them against their unbelief, which was principally the matter of the Spirit's striving, because he acted with them as the Spirit of Christ the Messiah, 1 Peter iii. 18, 19, and therefore to accept him with a sense of that sin, which was properly against that person in whose name he came and by whom he acted. The Spirit was then in the world striving against their unbelief in the promise, as he is now in the world striving against unbelief in the performance.

2. As the ligament and band of all sin: John viii. 24, 'If you believe not that I am he,' the Messiah sent of God, 'you shall die in your sins;' unless you believe me to be that seed of the woman, promised by the merit of my death to reconcile the world, you will sink with all the mass of your sins upon you. If unbelief be removed from a soul, the guilt of all other sins departs with it; if that remain, the guilt of all other sins is bound and fastened with an adamant chain upon the soul, and that with more crimson aggravations; where the notices of a mediator have been revealed, there is a superadded guilt to all the rest. As faith is the only means whereby we gain a pardon, so unbelief is the only formal cause of condemnation, though other sins are the meritorious cause of eternal death. As no price had been paid for our redemption, unless Christ had offered his blood, so no application can be made of that price to us without faith in that blood. Upon this, sins are flung into the depths of the sea; upon the other, they remain with their whole weight upon the soul.

In general. That unbelief is the greatest sin, appears,

1. Because God employs the highest means to bring men to a sense of it. This is in the text. It is the work of the Spirit to convince of this sin. The odiousness of sin to God appears by his sending Christ to expiate it; the odiousness of unbelief to God appears by his sending the Spirit to reprove it. That which calls for the Spirit's descent from heaven, in order to a conviction of it, is attended with black aggravations. This is the great errand of the Holy Ghost to the world; the first thing he does is to open the understanding, the eye of the soul, to see the malignity of other things, in order to convince the conscience of this before he changeth the will. This is the principal fort against which the Spirit plants his battery, and it is the last that is surrendered. A terrified sinner would run from the shot that is showered about his ears; he would reform, he would be holy, but cries out still, loath to believe. The prodigal will be next door to starving, before he will come to his father; and the woman with the bloody issue will spend all her estate before she will come to Christ.

And indeed it is a sin so deeply rooted that,

(1.) Reason cannot convince of it. Christ, the object proposed, is above the reach of a rational eye, and therefore the sin against him is not discerned in its blackness by mere reason. Reason will not inform a man of the stupendous love of God in sending his Son to die for men, that were and

* Catharin. Πάσινα θυσίαν, more sacrifice, more acknowledgment of God.—Heb. xi. 4.

would be unprofitable servants. Neither doth it consist with the natural notion men have of the justice of God, to lay upon an innocent person the sins of guilty offenders. It cannot naturally enter into any man's heart, that he that by power and wisdom made the world, should design by the cross and the foolishness of preaching to save it; that he that is infinite in love and mercy should make his Son to suffer. It is not therefore by the sparklings of bare reason men can see the blackness of this sin. Other sins may be known by natural light, because the duties to which they are opposite may be known by the light of nature. As the Spirit only discovers the greatness of Christ, the excellency of his person, the preciousness of his passion, so it also only shews what a sin it is to reject Christ. As faith is 'the gift of God,' Eph. ii. 8, a grace more peculiarly the birth of heaven, so the extirpation of its opposite must only be from God.

(2.) Natural conscience of itself helps not in this conviction. It indeed maintains the quarrel against other sins, and plains the way for the Spirit's victory. But in this case there is no auxiliary force from conscience, nothing of a natural interest to plead for faith. It finds all the powers of the soul prejudiced against it, maintaining a war against the doctrine of the gospel; and the tide of our own natures carry us forcibly against it. The Spirit enters the lists singly and maintains the duel alone. So that what was said of the temple may more properly be said of this, 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.'

2. It is a sin against the gospel; not as a killing law, but an healing command; a blacker sin, because against a better covenant. It is his peculiar gospel command; a precept of the highest valuation with him: 1 John iii. 23, 'This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.' Not only in regard of his authority (for so others were his commands), but in regard of the affection he hath to it, it being most pleasing to him, as ver. 22 intimates. The disobedience of this command, then, is most disgustful and hateful to him; it is his command, as being the last that ever he will give; it is a dispensation from the rigour of those commands in the covenant of works, but is to be followed with no dispensation by any other. The sin against it, then, is against the utmost gracious command that God will ever give. Other sins are against the precepts of his sovereignty, this against the precepts of his grace, as well as his sovereignty. The keeping this command brings him near to us to abide in us, ver. 24, the breaking this command sets him at a distance from us, and makes our persons and services loathsome to him. Wickedness against the gospel is greater than wickedness against the law, because the evangelical revelation hath more of grace and more of glory, the sin against it hath more of contempt and more of heinousness; a sin against that is a sin dyed seven times blacker, and will have a furnace seven times hotter. It is against the gospel, which is so holy a declaration of God's will that there cannot be an holier; so good in itself, so profitable for man, that nothing can be better; the sin therefore against it is so bad, that nothing can be worse. The law or covenant of works never discovered the object of faith, and therefore never enjoined any such formal act of faith in a mediator, and therefore takes no cognisance of this sin of unbelief. It, not making known the person to be believed in, cannot make known the sin of not believing. If the law commanded faith in relation to the object of Christ crucified, it must then acquaint us with Christ crucified. It would be an unreasonable law to enjoin an act about such an object, and never discover one syllable of that object to us. It doth not appear that Adam had any knowledge of Christ; the revelation of that bears date after his fall, at the time of the first

promise. If unbelief were a sin only against the law, then those that reject the gospel would be liable to no more punishment, than if they had been only under the law; but they will, as will appear in the sequel of this discourse. This faith is the peculiarity of the gospel; and when Christ is said to come 'preaching the gospel,' the matter of it is, 'repent and believe,' Mark i. 14, two things that never entered into the heart of the law to conceive. It is therefore a sin against the whole gospel, since the design of that is to remove our suspicions of God, and establish a trust in him; upon which account the Gentiles, that are without the gospel, are described by the title of men 'without hope,' 1 Thes. iv. 13. Unbelief is a making ourselves without ground of hope, contrary to all the encouragements of hope which God gives us in the gospel.

3. Unbelief is a sin against the highest testimony. It is against the two greatest witnesses that ever were, or can be, viz., the Father and the Son. The Father in the Old Testament, the Son in the New: John viii. 17, 18, 'I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me bears witness of me.' What did they witness? That Christ was the light of the world, ver. 12. The Father witnessed this in the Scripture: Isa. lxi. 4, 'I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles;' and by the works he did, John x. 37. Christ the eternal *λόγος* (the word) bears witness to his human nature. Since the testimony of two men of credit is worthy of belief, much more the testimony of two persons in the Deity, infallible in their testimony, in whom there can be no suspicion of falsity. Therefore Christ saith to Nicodemus, John iii. 11, 'We speak that we do know, and testify that which we have seen.' *We, i. e.* my Father and I; in answer to Nicodemus, who, ver. 2, acknowledged him a teacher come from God; therefore, saith Christ, we, God who hath sent me, and I, witness this. The witness follows, ver. 15, that 'whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' It is a sin against the witness of the whole Bible.

4. As faith is the choicest grace, so that which is opposite to it must be the greatest sin. It hath as high a place among sins, as faith hath among graces, and hath the precedency of all other sins, as faith hath the pre-eminence above all other graces; and what faith is in the nature of grace, unbelief is contrary to it in the nature of sin. Faith glorifies God, unbelief vilifies him; one justifies him, the other condemns him. 'Faith works by love,' Gal. v. 6, excites a love of God, and is excited by it; unbelief works by hatred. Faith is the spirit that quickens all obedience; all the fruits of the Spirit grow upon the root of faith; all the fruits of the flesh grow upon the root of unbelief. Faith turns common works into acts of grace, as the chemist doth metals into gold; unbelief turns all into dung and poison. Faith makes every prayer, though weak, an acceptable sacrifice; our prayers can no more enter into heaven by unbelief than the Israelites could enter into Canaan. As Christ is 'precious to them that believe,' 1 Peter i. 7, so is he odious to them that believe not; as faith is a consent to take Christ for an husband, so unbelief is a flat refusal of him. Faith cuts off all self-exaltation: Rom. iii. 27, 'Boasting is excluded by the law of faith,' and by the grace of faith too; unbelief supports it. It is a keeping up a pride greater than that of Adam's, a pride against God; it is indeed the Beelzebub, the prince of all those legions of sinful devils that quarter in the heart of a natural man.

5. It is more odious and loathsome to God, and hath in some respect a greater demerit in it, than sins against the light of nature. 'The killing an ox is as the slaying a man,' Isa. lxvi. 3. Not simply the killing an ox, but by reason of the unbelief in the Messiah, the ground of keeping up the

ceremonial worship by sacrifices after the exhibition of Christ in the promise, which made a worship formerly instituted as odious as murder, which was a disparaging the image of God. 'Sodom was not defiled by its pollutions, as Capernaum was by refusing Christ. Who can think of the sin of Sodom without indignation and horror? Yet the punishment of unbelievers being greater than theirs, implies the sin to be more grievous; because the unspotted righteousness of God would not inflict a punishment above the merit of the offence; he exacts no more than iniquity deserves, Job xi. 6. Now, 'it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for' a city or person that rejects the offers of the gospel, Mat. x. 15. That city was an epitome of hell both for sin and judgment, yet that defiling sin hath less guilt, less filth than the rejecting, purifying gospel grace. The punishment of Sodom should be like that of the whip to the punishment of rebels under the light of the gospel, which should be as the torment of a rack. The sin therefore is of a lighter tincture, like petty larceny to murder. All other sins indeed strike at some one or two attributes of God, and of God as considered as Creator; but this is a formal injury to God in all his perfections, and as appearing in the richest dress. Other sins being conversant about some created matter, preferring some creature before God, this is a preferring that very sin, the loathsomest thing under heaven, before a God of glory and an excellent Saviour. Other sins are conversant immediately about some inferior object, this strikes directly at God himself. It is therefore called *the sin*: Heb. xii. 1, 'Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.' The name of weight is given to other sins, but unbelief is called *the sin*. Most understand it of original concupiscence; but since it is the use the apostle makes of the former doctrine, Heb. xi., concerning the excellency of faith, I think it is more consonant to understand it of unbelief, the sin contrary to that faith he had been so highly commending. This is the provocation: Num. xiv. 11, 'How long will this people provoke me, and how long will it be ere they believe me?' They were guilty of many other provocations, but God reckons their incredulity as the top of all. It flings most dirt upon all the attributes of God, and doth not only wrong the Deity singly considered, but bears a spite at all the three persons.

In handling this subject, I shall shew,

1. What is to be understood by unbelief.
2. Wherein the sinfulness of it consists.

1. What is to be understood by unbelief.

First, negatively, what it is not.

We must not understand by it,

First, a want of assurance. Drooping spirits may be believers. There is a manifest distinction made between faith in Christ and the comfort of that faith; between believing to eternal life, and knowing we have eternal life: 1 John v. 13, 'These things have I written to you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.' There is a difference between a child's having a right to an estate, and his full knowledge of the title. There may be a trust in God where there is a walk in darkness, Isa. l. 10. If faith be not assurance, unbelief is not the want of it. If faith were assurance, a man would be justified before he believed; he must be justified before he can know himself justified. The object always precedes the knowledge of its existence; the sun must be risen before I know it is risen. If the want of assurance were this unbelief, a child of God would be an unbeliever every time God is pleased to draw a cloud between

heaven and the soul, and deny him the present tastes of the hidden manna. Unbelief is a sin, the want of assurance is not; to have it is not our duty but God's dispensation; he hath obliged the believer to seek it, but not to possess it. Assurance is a fruit that grows out of the root of faith: the fruits in winter appear not upon the tree. Because I see not a flourishing top, shall I deny the existence and sappiness of the root? Mary, when she wept at Christ's feet, had no assurance of his love, yet Christ sends her away with the encomiums of her faith, acted before the comfort dropped from his lips, Luke vii. 48, 50. The characters of faith may be written in the heart as letters engraven upon a seal, yet filled with so much dust as not to be distinguished; the dust hinders the reading of the letters, but doth not raze them out.

Secondly, not every interruption of the act of faith. Faith may lie asleep in the habit, when it doth not walk about in the act. A man upon this account can no more be called an unbeliever than a man asleep can be called a dead man. A believer may, like Samson, lose his present strength while he retains his life. Christ's prayer propped up Peter's faith from failing, when there was as little appearance of faith in him at one time as of life in a dead man; yet all that time there was a pulse of faith beating in him, which was made sensible by his Saviour's look. Faith is the vital principle: 'The just shall live by faith,' and where this is, though in a weak degree, such a person cannot be denominated an unbeliever. Fogs and mists darken the sun, but put not out that eye of the world; the sun shines though there be an interception of his beams. Yet this is but temporary. A true believer cannot be long without acting faith, no more than a living man can be without breath and some kind of motion. Thomas was not without faith, though his faith was at present asleep and had a defect in it.

Thirdly, not doubts, which may frequently step up in the soul. Such there are in the beginnings of faith, when the state of the soul is like that of the twilight, a mixture of light and darkness. Such a condition the soul is in, in its first conversion; as the Jews were when the chains of their captivity were knocked off, 'like men in a dream,' Ps. cxxvi. 6, 7, scarcely believing the performance of that which they vehemently desired, expected and believed in the promise, scarce imagining that they, so lately dead in a civil sense, should live and return to their land. When men are in a state of nature, they are most swayed by self-love and presumption; when they come into a state of grace, there riseth up jealousy and fear, and they think they cannot run far enough from the other extreme. This is a jealousy principally of themselves, but it redounds upon God. The mother and nurse of it is a secret partial infidelity, the ignorance of the promise, power, and extent of the mediation of Christ. This is not an unbelief habitually settled; it is rather a misbelief than unbelief, and rather a start of passion, a fit of infirmity, as Asaph: Ps. lxxvii. 10, 'This is my infirmity,' when he had doubted whether there were any mercy left in God, when he believed God had parted with all his bowels, it was from a sudden storm, not a settled way of argumentation. Not only at the beginning of faith, but after a full-grown faith, there may be some doubtings. David was none of the lowest form; when in a fit he gives the lie to God through the sides of his prophets: Ps. cxvi. 10, 11, 'I said in my haste all men are liars;' I did not seriously, and as my judgment, say so. All men are liars, the prophets too, who have brought to me the message of a kingdom. He casts the dint of his passion in the face of the promise; this was the pang of unbelief, not an evil heart of unbelief. He was a man after God's own heart in his state, though not

in that act. Doubting doth not imply a want of faith, but a weakness of faith. Christ acknowledgeth the few grains of Peter's faith when he reproves him for doubting: Mat. xiv. 31, 'O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?' A divine spark may live in a smoke of doubts without a speedy rising into a flame. When grace is at the bottom of doubting, there will be reliance on Christ, and lively petitions to him. Peter's faith staggers when he began to sink, but he casts a look, and sends forth a cry to his Saviour acknowledging his sufficiency: Mat. xiv. 30, 'Lord, save me.' Sometimes those doubtings strengthen our trust, and make us take faster hold on God: Ps. lvi. 3, 'What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.' This was a fear of himself or others, rather than a jealousy of God. Had he had unworthy suspicions of him, he would not have trusted him; he would not have run for remedy to the object of his fear. The waverings where faith is, are like the tossings of a ship fast at anchor (still there is no relying upon God), not like a boat, carried by the waves of the sea to be dashed against a rock. If the heart stay on Christ in the midst of those doubtings, it is not an evil heart of unbelief. Such doubtings consist with the indwelling of the Spirit, who is in the heart, to perform the office of a comforter against such fears, and to expel those thick fumes of nature.

Fourthly, Neither are temptations to unbelief and unbelieving thoughts injected, the unbelief I mean. If these be not entertained, though in regard of their matter they are unbelieving thoughts, yet formally they are not acts of our unbelief. If such thoughts in themselves were acts of our unbelief, while they are disowned by us, what shall we say to Christ, who had as great incentives to diffidence proposed to him by the devil as are to any of his members, Mat. iv. 3, who yet was without the least spot? The proposal is Satan's, the entertainment only makes them ours. A true believer will not harbour such thoughts of God; they may be forced in, and paused upon, but they can find no standing credit in the heart, but will be regarded as the hissings of the old serpent. If you receive them as a flash of lightning in your faces, shut your eyes against them, give them their pass, and command them to depart with a *Get thee hence, Satan*. If you pour out tears upon every assault, as Asaph did after he had had a multitude of them (Ps. lxxiii. 21, 'Thus was my heart grieved, and I was pricked in my reins,' his soul and all his affections were wounded, because of those foolish imaginations of God); I say, if we do thus, and run to heaven for help, it frees us from the charge of a state of unbelief upon this account. That cannot be unbelief that resists unbelief. Whatsoever votes against such thoughts is not a friend to them. If they be entertained with a temporary delight, unless they fully overcome the soul, they do not declare us in a state of infidelity. But if they are received, delighted in, applauded, and grow to a settled and rooted notion, and spread their fruits in the life, the person cannot be excused from the charge of unbelief.

Fifthly, Nor is it an unbelief of some truths through ignorance, provided they be not fundamental. Zacharias was a believer, and expecter of the Messiah, Luke i. 6; he could not else be said to be righteous, walking in all the ordinances of the Lord blameless, yet believed not that particular word spoken to him by the angel, ver. 20; and the disciples believed not the testimony of those that witnessed the resurrection of Christ, Mark xvi. 11, 13, 14. Every error in the head doth no more destroy the truth of faith, than every miscarriage in the life through infirmity nullifies the being of grace, or every spot upon the face impair the beauty and features of it. The apostles, those glorious instruments of the propagation of the gospel, and the first commissioned ambassadors of Christ, believed all the time of

Christ's life, and after his death too, according to the notion of the Jews, that the Messiah was to rear a temporal kingdom. Herein their errors were the same with the Jews' But they had a faith in believing this person Jesus to be the Messiah, and resting upon him for salvation; so that they had an habitual faith in the person, with a partial unbelief. The Jews had a total unbelief in the person, though an assent to, and mistaken expectation of the promise; nay, after the Spirit of God descended upon them, they would not believe the conversion of the Gentiles, though the Scripture was more full of promises of that than the conversion of the Jews; and they limited that precept of Christ of preaching to every creature as if it were meant only of that nation; yet those times were the richest for the knowledge of Christ and faith in him that ever were; and though before that they were ignorant of the design of the death of Christ, and did not believe his resurrection upon a declaration of it, yet certainly their habitual faith was not expelled. Peter's faith did not fail at the time Christ lay in the grave, for both the promise and prayer of Christ was a bar against it. Their faith, indeed, was stupefied and nonplussed at present; but it is one thing not to believe through weakness and ignorance, and another thing not to believe through wilfulness and neglect of enquiries. They did not believe the resurrection of Christ; but Peter, when he heard the news of it, did not supinely rest in his unbelief, but ran to inform himself, Luke xxiv. 12. If a fundamental truth be not believed, be not enquired into, if a man is wilfully ignorant of it, I know not how he can be excused from unbelief; nay, if we have a doubt of any truth of God, and cherish that doubt with complacency, and are afraid it should be a truth, and wish it false, I question whether this be consistent with true faith. I am sure such an one is guilty of unbelief in that act, because it is an act of the will, delighting in that which is contrary to faith.

Sixthly, Nor is it a negative unbelief (*carentia simplex fidei*) which is in the heathens, that is here to be understood. The schools distinguish infidelity into *negativa* and *privativa*; the one is in the heathens, who never had the means of faith; the other privative, which is *carentia fidei debita inesse*, is in those who are acquainted with the doctrine of the gospel, and therefore are obliged to believe. The heathens' unbelief, say the schoolmen,* is not their sin but their punishment, arising from the ignorance of divine revelation. There is a natural incapacity of acknowledging and believing that which never was discovered to them. A man may study sun, moon, and stars, yet never learn such a lecture as the death of the Son of God for the redemption of the world. Their ruin is not properly for the sin of unbelief, but for the sins against the first covenant, and against the law of nature, known and accepted by them; yet their ruin is for the want of faith, because those sins cannot be wiped off, but by faith in the blood of the second covenant; but they are not immediately chargeable with it as a sin. But the unbelief of those who live under the gospel, and believe not the report made to them, either from an affected ignorance, gross laziness, not inquiring into the truth, or a desperate contrariety to it, is a sin for which they are condemned. The heathens are under a *material* infidelity, because they are utterly ignorant of the matter of faith, never had anything of divine revelation; yet their ignorance being so great as to exclude faith, it is a true infidelity. But those who have had sufficient proposals of the gospel, and receive it not in the truth and love of it, are guilty of a *formal* unbelief. The former necessarily want faith, because they want the object of it; the latter voluntarily want faith, because they have the revelation of the object made to them, and will not embrace it. This is not a sin in the heathens.

* Aquin. 2da. 2da. qu. x. art. 1.

If it were a sin not to believe, the obligation to believe must arise from the law of nature, or from some new declaration; not from the law of nature, because that could not instruct them in the doctrine of justification by a mediator. There are notions of morality writ in men's hearts by nature, but none of the gospel, and naturally men are obliged to no other obedience than what Adam in innocence was bound to; but Adam in that state was not bound to believe in a mediator, not because of any natural inability in him, but because of the unfitness of such a declaration of redemption to him in such a state, which needed no recovery, he then standing by another title. But since Adam was obliged, as a rational creature, to believe whatsoever God should reveal, and so bound to believe in Christ upon the revelation of Christ to him, such an obligation indeed lies upon all men, as they are rational creatures, and the posterity of Adam, to believe when a revelation is made to them; and when such a revelation is made to the heathens, they would be condemned for not believing, because in Adam they had power to believe, and lost it. But till that revelation be made, infidelity in the heathens is not their crime, no more than it is a crime to disobey a law which was never published and made known to the people. They can no more be condemned for not believing than you would punish a man in the night for not seeing the sun before it is risen, or for not dancing at the sound of music he never heard. The light of the gospel never dawned upon them, nor the sound of it ever arrived to their ears, yet they are condemned for want of believing in Christ, as a sick man dies for want of medicine to cure him, but his own sickness is the cause of his death. They are only obliged by the law of creation, but the gospel was not delivered to Adam by the law of creation, as he was a common person, but after he had put himself out of that capacity by his fall, and the headship put into other hands, the hands of Christ. The Scripture is clear in this. If it be 'the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light,' John iii. 18, the rejecting this light is not their condemnation, unless it shines upon them. And Christ tells his apostles, John xv. 22, that if he 'had not come and spoken to the Jews, they had not had sin;' they had not had the sin of unbelief, which is the highest condemning sin; they had not been guilty of it, if they had not had declarations of the gospel by the mouth of Christ and his ministers. And though some think the heathens will be judged according to the gospel, because of Rom. ii. 16, 'God will judge all men according to my gospel,' yet that is to be understood only according as it is revealed in the gospel; for, ver. 12, he speaks of the judgment of the heathens by the law of nature, and the judgment of the Jews by the law of grace. He speaks of their being judged by Christ as it is declared in the gospel, but not of the gospel as the rule whereby they shall be judged who never heard of it; for God doth not bind any to a mere impossibility, nor require more of men than what he hath given man by creation power to do.

Secondly, But positively by unbelief we must understand,

First, A denial of the truth of the gospel. When men assent not to the doctrine of the gospel by an act of the understanding;* when, like Julian the apostate, they regard it as *γέλωτά και φλυαρόν*, a matter of laughter, a mere trifle; or, as the Jews call the gospel, *ספר שקר*, a volume of lies; or as a French papist said of the epistles of Paul, that he believed them no more than he did Æsop's fables. I doubt there may be many such among us. I am sure the practical unbelief among us argues this dissent in the understanding to lurk in more than we imagine, as the foundation of all the other

* Clark's Sermons, p. 116.

unbelief. The first temptation Satan assaults the soul with, after some awakenings of conscience, is to question the matter to be believed. If he can hinder men from laying the foundation of truth in their understanding, he prevents all the superstructure, which cannot be raised without it. Many there are who, because they cannot comprehend the mysterious ways and counsels of God, which seem unlikely and improbable to reason, deny the whole word; whereas it would be more suitable to submit to God's will than to question it. Such a dogmatical unbelief, which is not very rare among us, is an exploding the whole doctrine of the gospel, which is inexcusable and irrational, since men every day believe other things upon far less evidence than they have for the gospel, whose divine authority is witnessed by the manner of its propagation in all ages, contrary to the power, strength, parts, and eloquence of the world, and supported by a concurrence of providence against and under the violences of men.

Secondly, A doubting of the truth of the doctrine of the gospel. Many who will not openly deny it, yet question whether it be true, and think that which is true uncertain and dubious; this is unbelief. Such a doubtful opinion is no full assent, but a floating judgment, a suspicion that it may be true, and a suspicion that it may be false, like a pendulous weight which swings to and fro, as much on one side as on the other. There is an uncertainty in the speculative judgment, when a man knows not what he should assent to. There is indeed sometimes a doubting of admiration, which riseth not from any contrariety in the heart to the matter proposed, but implies a suitability of the heart to it; but by the greatness of the thing offered it is dazzled, as the eye by the splendour of the sun. Such an admiration was Abraham's at the power of God to raise seed out of such a dry root, Gen. xvii. 17; such a doubt had the blessed Virgin, which was joined with a modest inquiry for better instruction, Luke i. 24, her reason being non-plussed in the manner of the thing revealed to her above the course of nature. But where there is a doubt of diffidence of the great truths of the gospel,* regarding them as of doubtful credit, this is unbelief, because it is a judgment contrary to the doctrine of faith; for we are not only to believe that the things revealed are true, but that they are certain and infallible. As all suspicion is an opinion of evil with light conjectures, so a suspicion in matters of faith is an opinion of falsity upon light conjectures. Such a suspicion includes a judgment contrary to faith, because, without some judgment in the case, there cannot be an opinion of one thing or other. Since all men are in the rank of believers or unbelievers, a suspension of our belief of the doctrine of the gospel cannot be ranked under the banner of faith; it is at best, for the present, a more modest refusal, rather than a downright rejection. As a man is thought to refuse a proposition when he seems unwillingly to comply with it, and will take time to consider, he that is not with Christ is against him, he that receiveth him not refuseth him. If faith be a certain knowledge,—John xvii. 8, 'They have known surely that I came out from thee,'—then an uncertain opinion is unbelief. In many men there is uncertainty from an acuteness of understanding, whereby they are dextrous in raising objections, as Mark xi. 31, 33, which makes them uncertain how to steer themselves, like a needle between two loadstones, which refuseth neither, nor closeth with either of them. Such an unbelief there is among many of us, a believing a probability of the gospel, not the certainty; nay, scarce the probability, but owning it outwardly, as they would do a fashion.

Thirdly, Refusal to accept heartily of Christ upon the terms of the gospel, which is opposite to justifying faith, when there is not a fiducial motion to

* Suarez, vol. v. Disp. xvi, sec. ii. parag. 2.

Christ as the centre. There may be assent, and, as some divines say, upon a divine motive, yet a man still under the notion of an unbeliever; for a *dogmatical* faith is not always accompanied with a *justifying*, though a justifying faith always supposeth a dogmatical, or assent to the truth as antecedent and preparatory, or else including it in its essence. The devils, from evident experience, believe there is a God, and believe the principles of the Christian religion (as we believe the wind blows, the sun shines, and the air freezeth); and they have had experience of the power of Christ wasting their kingdom. Both these faiths, dogmatical and justifying, must go together. There is a double act of the soul, the understanding to propose, the will to embrace, suitable to the double object in the promise, which must be considered as true, and so move the understanding as good, and so affect the will. This dogmatical faith is necessary, as a glass window that lets in the light. This unbelief is when, though men profess an assent to the truth with their understandings, yet they consent not to it with their wills, and by reason of corrupt habits, embrace it not as good; when, though there is not an evil head, there is 'an evil heart of unbelief,' Heb. iii. 12. They may well be said not to believe a thing, who, though they believe the truth of it, yet have no due estimate of the goodness of it; when there is a sufficient evidence made to them, both of the truth and goodness of the matter revealed, they will not come up to the terms of the gospel. Such as those are in every assembly, who, though they dissent not from the truth of the Scripture, and the dogmatical points in it, yet they never seriously reflect upon them, have not valuations of them. They may have approbations of the truth as it is rational, but not an esteem and application of it as holy. They have no sense of the need of Christ, nor of the worth of Christ; value not the commands to obey him, nor the promises to rely upon him, nor Christ to embrace him, nor the threatenings to fear him. The precepts, as well as the promises of Christ, are the objects of faith, so the precepts, as well as the promises, are the objects of unbelief. The precepts are not the formal object of faith, but of obedience; yet he that believes not the precept believes not the promise, which is an encouragement of obedience to the precept. They then are unbelievers who, though they would have the safety Christ hath purchased, will not pay him the service he hath merited; who postpone the commands of the gospel to the indulgences of the flesh; who would have salvation, but reject the yoke. They renounce the articles of the gospel, that would preserve their sins, which Christ principally came to save from; and God counts such no less unbelievers than he did the Jews, who cried, 'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord,' and would have nothing of the image of the Lord in their hearts. So then unbelief is properly a sin in those places where the gospel is preached; they are guilty of it who have heard the gospel. We must not cast it off from ourselves to the heathens; it is, indeed, their punishment, but our sin. That is disobedience to a law which is against that law, when it is revealed and known; and that is unbelief which is disobedience to the law of faith when discovered to men. Denial of the truth of the gospel, or contempt of the terms of the gospel, are properly and truly unbelief.

But of this practical unbelief I shall speak further in the sequel of this discourse. None will deny that the Jews were guilty of positive unbelief, who, though they did believe the gospel as it was veiled in their Mosaical rites, and firmly believed a Messiah, yet were opposers of him when the mask was taken off. What they believed in the Old Testament they rejected in the New. So among us men believe Christ to be the Messiah; they believe him with their heads and deny him with their hearts; they

assent to him in the notion, and deny him in the application ; they believe his person, and reject his doctrine.

2. Wherein the sinfulness of unbelief doth consist.

I. *First*, It is against God.

II. *Secondly*, It is worse than the sin of the Jews against Christ.

III. *Thirdly*, It hath many other reasons of sinfulness in it.

I. *First*, It is against God.

It strikes peculiarly at God. Whatsoever is done against any institution of God is interpreted by God as done against himself. When the Israelites, weary of Samuel's government, desired his resignation, and the electing of a king, God calls it a rejecting of himself, 1 Sam. viii. 7, that he should not reign over them. The slighting a mortal creature in the ends whereto God hath appointed him, being a contempt of God, by whose authority he acts, a rejecting of Christ, who is the highest ordinance of God, whose words are the words of God spoken in his name, as God foretells, Deut. xviii. 19, is a breathing forth the highest disdain of God. Though it be an enmity immediately against Christ, it redounds to God, because Christ is his Christ, his anointed. The conspiracy is joint against both, a 'taking counsel against the Lord and his anointed, to break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from them,' Ps. ii. 2. Let us cast away the promises of an eternal kingdom, and those threatenings of hell,* whereby they would allure us or scare us into an allegiance, to submit our necks to the yoke of their laws. Let us slight all those reasons, and spurn away those vain hopes and fears, those cords whereby they would draw us unto their power. It casts a dishonour upon God more than all other iniquities ; it is a departing from him after the highest and clearest declarations of his nature, a representation of him under all the disparagements imaginable, and under all encouragements of complying with him. As those that trust Christ are 'to the praise of God's glory,' Eph. i. 12, so those that distrust him are to the dishonour of his name.

1. It is the greatest reproach and undervaluing of God. He calls it a wearying of him more than other sins : Isa. vii. 13, 'Will you weary my God also ?' The sin of Ahaz, upon which this speech was uttered, was a distrust of God, not properly this unbelief we are speaking of. God had declared his intent to preserve Judah against the invasion of the Syrian, and to defeat the counsels of the league against them. To strengthen Ahaz his belief in the promises, he commands him to ask a sign as a seal of this assurance, and gives him the choice of what sign he pleased ; wisheth him to put his power to the utmost trial, either in heaven or earth : ver. 11, 'Ask it either in the depth or in the height above.' Judgments against the enemies, from the bowels of the deep to the windows of heaven. And as he gives him liberty to employ his power, so he assures him of the tenderness of his mercy : ver. 11, 'Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God ;' though thou hast been so wicked an idolater, if thou wilt repent, confide in me, walk according to my will, I will be a God in covenant with thee, I will be a God to preserve thee, and a God to judge thine enemies ; thy *Jehovah* in being their *Elohim*, and manifesting my power for thee against them. Ahaz his answer seems to be a start of a modest humility, though indeed it was disobedience not to do as God commanded him : ver. 12, 'And Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord ;' he would not tempt God, or as some read the word אֲנַסֶּה, I will not *exalt* God ; the words import, I will not trust God,

* Foleng. in loc.

I will send to the king of Assyria, who can better save me than the Lord. As he did, 2 Kings xvi. 7. I will fortify my cities, train my soldiers, crave assistance of my neighbours. Observe, though God, in his message to him, offered himself to be his God in covenant with him, Ahaz would not accept of the proffer, owns him not as his God in his answer, 'I will not tempt *the Lord*;' not, I will not tempt *my God*, which had been an argument of his trust, and so had altered the tenor of his answer to an humble resignation. Ahaz would not be beholden to God, he would not honour God so much as to give him an opportunity to glorify his great power; if we read the words, 'I will not exalt the Lord.' Upon this God promiseth a sign, ver. 14, that 'a virgin should conceive and bear a Son, and call his name Emmanuel,' and this should be a sign. I will not discourse how this was to be a sign to Ahaz, or the body of the people then in being; but take notice, every unbeliever is an Ahaz, reproacheth the kindest offers of God. God calls to men to turn to him, to place their whole confidence in him; but men reject the offer, run to creatures, and thus weary God. If it was so great a scorn of God, not to accept his proffer for a temporal deliverance, not to regard any sign from him, how great is it not to regard the sign of his greatest power, wisdom, and love, which he hath manifested in that Son born of a virgin, who is Emmanuel, God with us! An unbeliever is such a scorner of God, that he is not willing that that dirt he hath cast in the face of God by his other sins should be wiped off; not willing to sanctify that name by believing, which he hath profaned by other sins against the law; will not embrace that Christ which God offers him, whereby he may in some sense render him a satisfaction for all the wrongs God hath sustained by him. As faith 'gives glory to God,' Rom. iv. 20, so unbelief casts reproach and scorn upon him.

2. It robs God of the honour of all his attributes. He that believes not God, doth fling dirt in the face of all those attributes which were illustrious in the work of redemption: of his wisdom which contrived it, of his righteousness which executed it, of his mercy which is infinitely commended by it, of his truth which is engaged to make good the intent and purchase of it to every one that believes. Either men believe not that God will perform what he saith, and then it is an injury to his truth; or they hope for salvation by some other means, and then it is a contempt of his wisdom; or that the things proposed by him are not amiable and desirable, and then it is a reproach to his goodness; or they trust to some creature helps against his command, and then it is a disobedience to his sovereign authority, or they think him not able to effect the things he hath promised, and then it is a disparaging his power and sufficiency. Whatsoever attribute in God is a ground of, or an encouragement to, faith, is struck at by unbelief. The grounds and encouragements of faith are these: God is infinitely wise, and cannot be deceived; he is infinitely true, and cannot deceive his creature in declaring what is false; he is infinitely good, and will not deceive his creature, for deceit is most opposite to love and goodness; he is infinitely happy, and hath no reason to deceive his creature, which could not add to his happiness; whereas deceit among men sometimes improves their interest, but deceit in God would dissolve the Deity; he is infinitely powerful, and well able to make good what he asserts, to confer what he promiseth, inflict what he threatens. As all these are indisputable grounds of faith, and are owned and honoured by it, so they are blemished in their reputation by unbelief, and marked with a base alloy; they are all foolishly charged by it, and made the common scoff of it. There is not an attribute but may draw up a particular indictment against an unbeliever, for an offence against its crown and

dignity. And as there was not an attribute but God intended to glorify in Christ, so there is not one but this sin doth really vilify.

3. It is an undeifying of God, as much as lies within the compass of a creature's power. He that denies any one attribute of God, seems to deny God himself, to ungod him, strips him of the glory of a deity. Take but one pin, necessary to the frame of a watch, and you take away the perfection of it. Those attributes which unbelief stabs, are essential to the being of a deity. God can no more be a God without them, than the sun can be a sun without light, or any of us men without a rational soul. Unbelief is not so indulgent as to deny God of the honour of one perfection, but of many; nor so mild as absolute atheism, which denies the being of a God. It is a less scorn to deny that ever there was such a man as Cæsar, than to affirm indeed there was such a person, but he was a fool, coward, false, cruel, and the vilest man that lived: it is better to deny his being, than to count him infamous. Unbelief strips God of his richest robes, his highest virtues,* which were more singularly glorified in redemption, than they were in the creation, or could be in the creation of innumerable worlds, more glorious than this without the death of his Son for them. Not to acknowledge God in Christ, is to deny him that glory that the creation and common providence cannot afford him. As our Saviour was tormented by the Jews in every part of his body,—head with thorns, face with spittle, hands and feet with nails, and wholly with reproaches in what was dearest to him,—so is God dishonoured by unbelief in every perfection. As their actions denied Christ to be the Saviour of the world, so the acts of this sin deny God to be the God of the world.

4. It strikes at all the three persons. As all have an hand in the salvation wrought by Christ, so the rejecting that redemption dashes a blot upon all. They all sat in joint consultation about man's redemption; they were joint in counsel, joint in publication of it; the Father in his first promise to Adam, and in a voice at Christ's baptism; Christ in his person, and the Holy Ghost bearing witness by the gifts conferred upon men after the ascension of Christ, which was a testimony of his glorious entertainment: Acts v. 31, 32, 'And we are his witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, which God hath given to them that obey him.' The Father sends, Christ dies, the Spirit offers to apply; the neglect of this is against the wisest counsel, the greatest persons in being. The Spirit was the great witness after the ascension of Christ, by the collation of eminent gifts, whereby a divine approbation was given to the doctrine of Christ from heaven. He revealed nothing but what Christ had before done, and wrought, and built upon that foundation, John xvi. 14, he glorifies Christ, for he receives of his. He discovers the eternal counsels of God, the depths of divine wisdom, which 'the heart of man could not conceive,' 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10; The Father bears witness to Christ by undeniable miracles; the Spirit adds his testimony by internal operations, and urging the truths of Christ upon the hearts of men; Christ bears witness to himself by his obedience and death. So then, any slight of Christ is a slight of the Father and the Holy Ghost.

But particularly,

First, It blemisheth the truth and veracity of God. He that believes 'sets to his seal that God is true,' John iii. 33, *i. e.* he approves and declares solemnly the truth of that revelation God hath made.† Men fix their

* As the word is, 1 Peter ii. 9, 'Shew forth the praises (*ἀρετὰς*, the virtues) of him who hath called you.'

† Daillé, Sermon sur Jean iii. p. 458.

seals to contracts to ratify them ; faith is as the subscription to the word of God, protesting that what God speaks is true. And it is the highest glory a creature can give to the Creator, to acknowledge him a God of eternal and immutable verity. Since Christ, 'whom God hath sent, speaks the words of God, ver. 34, since what he declares is not simply his own, but the instructions of his Father ; the acknowledging those declarations to be true, is an acknowledging the truth of God in Christ. Now, as the true believer glorifies not only the truth of the Son, but of the Father, so the unbeliever outrageth not simply Christ, but God the Father, whose counsels and commands are published by him. As assent is a justifying God, as the people and the publicans, by assenting to the truth John Baptist declared, are said to do, Luke vii. 39, so a dissent is casting an aspersion of falsity on God. In common sense, when we say we believe not a man, we declare him to be false ; and no better a title than that of a liar doth this sin give to God : 1 John v. 10, 'He that believes not God, hath made him a liar, because he believes not that record that God gave of his Son.' It is as certain that he gives the lie to God, as it is certain God cannot speak a lie to him. Thus men write deceit upon the promises when they do not believe them : 'Though I have redeemed them, yet have they spoken lies against me,' Hosea, vii. 13 ; אפרם, though I redeem them, though I have promised them redemption by Christ, yet they slander me as if I were the falsest person in the world. We bely God when we believe not his threatenings, and promise ourselves impunity under sin : Jer. v. 12, 'They have belied the Lord, and said, It is not he, neither shall evil come upon us ;' as if his promises were like the picture of a sun, without heat and light ; his threatenings like the sound of pot-guns, as if the one were toys, and the other bugbears. This is to represent God a cozenor and impostor, though he hath engaged his royal word ; to make the whole Bible an heap of fallacies. The glory of a man is his credit ; it is an honourable character, such a man is a man of his word ; it is a disgraceful character of God to fancy the first truth guilty of lying ; it is a title he hath joined with his honour as a Creator, that he 'keeps truth for ever,' not to part with it any more than with any other perfection, no more than with the title of Creator : Ps. cxlvi. 6, 'Which made heaven, and earth, and sea, and all that is therein, which keeps truth for ever.' These represent him with no truth to keep, or no heart to preserve it.

The guilt of it in this regard will appear,

First, It is in this respect a greater sin than despair. Despair is deservedly counted an horrid sin, a wrong to the mercy of God ; but this is greater. Unbelief is against a divine good as it is in itself,* for as much as in us lies, we make God the author of a lie. Despair is opposed to a divine good as communicable to us, and therefore is a less wrong to God ; despair questions not the stability of divine faithfulness in itself, but the communicableness of that good promised to the soul ; but unbelief lays a battery against the divine nature. Despair acknowledgeth the truth in regard of the object, but doubteth in regard of the subject ; they count the divine proclamation true, but think themselves without the compass of it.

Secondly, It strips God of the glory of his nature, who can as soon cease to be, as cease to be true. Some say that if God should appear in a human shape, light would be his body, and truth his soul ; so essential is truth to the Deity, 'it is impossible for God to lie,' Heb. vi. 18. If we fancy him a liar, we fancy him no God, because we represent him doing a thing impossible to the divine nature, changing an unchangeable goodness into a hateful unfaithfulness. What is his power, knowledge, sufficiency, if truth and

* Suarez, vol. viii. disp. xvi. sec. ii. parag. 3.

faithfulness, the glory of all, be wanting? As sincerity is the beauty of all graces, so veracity and holiness is the lustre of all divine perfections. To give the lie is incivility to an inferior, insolence to a superior, a kind of treason to a prince; yet this may be done without unmanning a man, or deposing a prince, but it cannot be done to God without degrading him to the condition of those lying vanities we trust to. It is, indeed, so heinous as that it puts upon God the character of the devil, who is called 'the father of lies,' as though God should be projecting nothing else from eternity (as the devil hath been from the time of his fall) but to mock and cozen the souls of his creatures into everlasting destruction. It is to count him worse than the devil, by how much they fancy him more powerful, but equally false. It is strange that a man who knows in some measure what God is, should be so insolent and blasphemous as virtually to charge him with a dissembling nature; yet so unbelievers do, though not in positive opinion, yet by interpretation and practice. And as they make God as bad, so they make themselves worse than the devil, who believes the truth of God, though he feels only the terror of it, and nothing of the comfort.

Thirdly, It makes God guilty of perjury. God hath not only obliged himself by his royal word, but his solemn oath, 'two immutable things,' Heb. vi. 17, 18. His promise, considered alone, is of eternal verity; he is true and unchangeable; he doth not promise one thing and purpose another. To this he hath added his oath, to remove all controversy and doubt which may arise in the mind. Not to believe a man of an honest repute, when he swears the truth of a thing before a magistrate, is a gross uncharitableness, unless we certainly know, or have strong presumptions, that what he swears is false. How black is it then not to believe God speaking? how much blacker not to believe God swearing? As the oath of God, the calling all his perfections, his very being as a testimony to the truth of his assertion, is the highest ground of assurance that can be given, so the not believing it is the highest injury that can be offered to a God of truth. He annexeth his oath to his word for the encouragement of sinners to faith and repentance: Ezek. xxxiii. 11, 'As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.' As I am an eternal, immortal being, so surely do I delight not in the death of a sinner, but in his conversion and life. How great a charge of perjury doth unbelief bring against God, whose condescension hath been so infinitely wonderful as to give us his oath for a cure of our mistrust, to invite men to faith and repentance upon the security of his own eternal life and being!

Fourthly, It is aggravated from the clearness of the revelation. The higher the revelation is, the stronger arguments there are of the divine authority, and the greater contempt of the truth and authority of the person so revealing. If an angel should bring a message from heaven, what man would be jealous of the truth of it, when brought by so pure a creature? But this revelation was made by the Son of God, who lay 'in the bosom of the Father,' John i. 18, and is truth itself; to the propagation of which truth, neither the wit and eloquence, the strength and valour, the wealth and interest of the world can lay any claim. It hath appeared in the whole progress with a divine stamp in the forehead of it. The first declarations of it were laid in the sufferings of the publishers: Could such multitudes be thought to lose their lives, so dear to man, for a mere falsity? No man is so mad as to invent a fable, and to stand to it to the loss of his life, and whatsoever is of most account with him in the world. Would any affection to Christ have animated them to expose themselves to the sharpest sufferings, had they had but any jealousies that Christ was an impostor? No, they would rather have expressed their hatred than their love (who can love an-

other for a gross abuse of him?) or had they been so extravagant as to be desirous to keep up the credit of their Master, would they for it have made themselves the public scorn and off-scouring of the world? It could not be covetousness or ambition, or any other lust, which could be the principle of their publication of Christianity; the little wealth they had, they forfeited for it. No ambition could build any hopes of worldly honours upon the doctrine of a crucified Christ. The Jews had lately crucified the Master, and were not like to honour the servants for a charge of murder against the Son of God. The Gentiles were not likely to receive it, and applaud them for it by any strength of nature. Ambitious men take rational courses for attaining honour; but this was against the rooted customs of the world, which are hardly parted with; and contradicators of ancient religions use to be violently persecuted to death for the honour of their acknowledged gods. But had such principles excited them to a publication of this doctrine, surely they would gladly have desisted, after they had found their hopes without success, when they found blows instead of honours; or they would have armed the professing multitudes, and conquered countries; but they used not their swords against their enemies, but received the strokes of their enemies' swords into their own breasts, for the defence of the doctrine; and that not for a time, but during their whole lives. Not one sword was drawn in the defence of it by any votary to it. They resisted no force used against them, though, by reason of their multitude, they were capable of preserving themselves, and of offending their enemies. Their discipline was strict, the maxims of their doctrines were advantageous to mankind; they thwarted no moral precepts that were amiable by the light of nature, but highly advanced them; there could not be a way of publishing it more clear and full, to manifest it to be the truth and doctrine of God, than this. Had it been uttered by the voices of angels in the air, we might have suspected them to be impure devils as soon as holy angels. When the way of the revelation of the gospel hath been altogether divine, without any taint of worldly means for the propagation of it, the not believing it, the not complying with the precepts and promises of it, is an high contempt of divine truth.

Fifthly, It is aggravated from the performance of God's gospel promises. It is a great sin not to believe the truth of God when it is declared, but a greater not to believe it when it hath been made good. It is not only a word, but 'a tried word, as silver tried in the fire,' which hath been found to be good and sound metal, and free from all mixture of baser metals, as lead or tin, with it, Ps. xviii. 30. 'The word of the Lord is tried,' Ps. xii. 6, and there have been experiences of this in all ages. Not one among all those multitudes that have sincerely professed him, could charge him with falsity. God hath given the highest evidence of his veracity in making good the promises of assistance to our mediator in the exercise of his office. The promises were made to him as mediator and undertaker of that great work of suffering for us. The performance, therefore, of them to Christ is a manifestation of God's truth to us; for though Christ was the immediate subject of those promises, yet God's glory in our good was the ultimate intendment of them; and what was promised and performed in the head, is influential upon all the members, and is the main ground of faith, and so proposed in Scripture. The resurrection of Christ is everywhere set out as the strong foundation of faith in him. God carried him through the gulf to a glorious immortality. Since, therefore, God hath performed the greatest promises, wherein his power could be engaged (for his power and truth were then tried in the highest manner), it is a great disparagement to him to distrust his truth in those things which require less power to effect them, after so great an expe-

rimment of his faithfulness. Unbelief denies that truth is crowned with a rich performance.

Again, This sin would frustrate the truth of God in the promises remaining to be fulfilled by Christ, or but in part fulfilled. God promised him a seed, a generation to serve him. This was an article in the covenant of redemption, as the great encouragement of Christ to undertake that work. If all were of the unbeliever's mind, would not the truth of this promise lie in the dust? Every unbeliever would have it so. He is a child of the devil, and like him envies God a glory, the glory of his truth and power; and, like Ahaz, Isa. vii. 12, 'I will not exalt the Lord,' if the word *tempt* may be so read, as some read it.

The power of God was the chief ground of faith in the promise in Abraham's time, Rom. iv. 21; but since the performance, not only the power of God, which he had given an evidence of in the creation, but the truth of God, whereof he had given an evidence in Christ; and in this sense the fathers' not knowing God by the name *Jehovah* is meant, Exod. vi. 3. They did know God by that name; for Abraham calls the mount Moriah so, Gen. xxii. 14. But they knew him not by that name in regard to the faithfulness and truth of God, which that name signifies. As the unbelief of the Jews, after the deliverance from Egypt, where God had manifested himself *Jehovah*, was greater than before, so it is greater now, because it is against the highest manifestations of God as *Jehovah*, in accomplishing his promise in the assistance of Christ, and bringing forth the mediation promised.

Sixthly, This is aggravated from our believing creatures before God, whereby we lessen the esteem of his truth below that of a creature. Have not we many times trusted the honesty of man, who in his best estate is vanity, and given him credit for many pounds? Not to believe the great promise of God in Christ, wherein he hath made himself in a sort our debtor, is to debase the credit of the unerring God below that of a mutable mortal. How corrupted is that nature that will believe man, a wicked man, a lying man, rather than God, who is under so many obligations of promises to make good his word; nay, believe man's falsities before God's verities? Do not men believe often the vain predictions of men, and their promises of help and furtherance of business of concern, and receive them with more gladness and confidence than ever we received the clear promises of the gospel? The credit of God, that cannot lie, is of less value with men, and hath a lighter influence upon them, than the word of a deceivable creature. What a reproach to God is it for a man to give no credit to his word, sealed by the blood of his Son, and confirmed by various repetitions, and yet will trust an inconstant element with thousands, which may be lost by the fury of winds and waves? A patent of an earthly honour from a temporal prince is highly valued, when the great gospel charter, where the truth of God is engaged for security, is slighted, the highest faithfulness not esteemed worth the crediting. When God is not believed, we must needs give credit to the devil; if we believe not Christ, we believe the devil, there being but those two heads, one by God's authority, the other by his own usurpation. Unbelief, then, changeth the devil into a god, a liar from the beginning into truth, and the truth of God into a lie, and the God of truth into a liar; it prefers the dictate of the devil, and so owns the faithfulness of the devil above the faithfulness of God.

Seventhly, It is the greater contempt, because God doth highly value his truth, yea, above all his name: Ps. cxxxviii. 2, 'Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.' Whatsoever of God's name should drop to the ground, this shall remain glorious in all successions of ages; it shall stand

firmer than the ordinances of heaven, without the staggering of one iota or tittle of it. Nothing is so dear to God as his truth; he will fold up the heavens like a garment, and crumble the earth to dust, before one tittle of his word, of his gospel as well as his law, shall vanish and pass away, Mat. v. 18. God values the promises of the gospel no less than the precepts and threatenings of the law; his truth hath an interest with his love in the one, as well as with his authority and justice in the other. The wrong is greater to us when we are struck through the sides of that which is most precious in our esteem. This sin, therefore, as being against the truth of God, is odious to him. As it is irrational not to love the chiefest goodness, so it is irrational not to believe the supreme truth. No man but disesteems another that will not take his word, when yet himself knows he is a mutable creature. How much greater is the offence against the God of unchangeable faithfulness, to put the lie upon him by not believing those truths he hath so solemnly proclaimed and miraculously confirmed? Has not the eternal truth reason to be offended with men for not believing him, when he promiseth and swears too? It is strange that if God had a deceitful and dissembling nature, he should discover it at no less expense than the royal blood of heaven, and not deceive men without such solicitous entreaties of them to believe in him through his Son. To count a man a liar is to stop all passages to a conversation with him; to conceive of God under such a notion is not only to deny any commerce with him ourselves, but to count all foolish that address to him or are willing to believe him.

Secondly, It casts a black aspersion upon the wisdom of God. The wisdom of God appears not singly in the gospel, but with admirable variety of mysteries and contrivance, Eph. iii. 10, 'manifold wisdom of God,' a depth of counsel in the forming it, a glorious contexture of means for the completing it, wisdom in the drawing out the glory of his grace from the rubbish of sin, in breaking the neck of the devil's designs, by those means whereby he wrought our ruin, even by the human nature, in bringing about man's redemption by the disgrace, infirmities, weakness of human nature, means seeming contrary to so glorious an end; the admirable uniting justice and mercy in one point, reducing them to one end with an entire consent, the manifestation of the highest hatred of sin, and the choicest love to the sinner by one and the same act; all these are treasures of wisdom opened in Christ. His wisdom is more glorious in the contriving redemption than in laying the platform and model of creation. That God might create millions of worlds is obvious to the conceptions of men that understand him to be omnipotent, and give more sparkling evidences of his wisdom in the fabric. But how he should make justice and mercy conspire together with a joint consent, and salve the honour of all his attributes in the recovery of guilty man, is an abyss of wisdom which transcends the conceptions of men and angels till it be revealed, and after the discovery must needs leave them in eternal astonishment. This must be no inconsiderable affair, which is the object of the highest wisdom in the Deity.

Now, unbelief chargeth God either,

1. With folly in regard of the unnecessaryness of it. If men think they have ability to save themselves (as all justiciaries and fondlers of their own righteousness virtually imagine), what a needless work was this in God, to make his Son a sacrifice for man's salvation! No wise man would spend his time to contrive a way to make birds to fly, which have both wings and a power to exercise them to that purpose, or to make cork to swim, which hath an aptitude because of its sponginess. What is the secret ground of the rejecting Christ, but a conceit in man that he hath a power to save him-

self without him? For since salvation is highly desirable, if we will not accept it from another upon his terms, we imply we can attain it by our own power. What is the language of this, but that God busied himself to no purpose, and was employed from eternity in a needless affair, which is a most unworthy reflection upon God and Christ; since God, being infinitely wise, he would not have purposed it, and Christ, being the wisdom of God, would not have debased himself to death, had it not been for the highest concern both to God and man. It had been inconsistent with the wisdom of both, the one to purpose, the other to undertake, such a task, but for the most weighty necessity and the most advantageous benefit. It was the will of God that Christ should take a body for our sanctification: Heb. x. 10, 'By the which will we are sanctified' (*i. e.* by the will of God which Christ came in his body to perform) 'through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ.' What doth unbelief but blot out the characters of God's wisdom, the orders of his will, accounting it unnecessary for God either to prepare Christ a suffering body, or for Christ to offer up himself to God in it? It imputes the rejoicing of Christ at this body to an ignorance and folly in him, as if it were a folly in God to command it, and a folly in Christ to obey such a command, a fruitless design and an unnecessary employment. Unbelief indeed is nothing else but a cavil with the judgment and reason of God. Upon this score the apostle chargeth the incredulity of the gentiles; they counted the gospel foolishness; the choicest mysteries of divine skill were of no better repute with them than the nonsense of fools and the extravagancies of madmen: 1 Cor. i. 23, 'Unto the Greeks foolishness.'

2. Or, if men do account the coming of Christ necessary, and so free God from the charge of folly, they at least charge his wisdom with a mistake in the means of salvation, as if it were undertaken without precedent consideration. Either Christ hath sufficiently performed his office or not; if he hath, why is he not accepted by faith? If he be not accepted, there is a tacit imputation in the refusal of believing that the wisdom of God was defective in the person he appointed, that God was frustrated in his expectations, that he pitched upon a weak and unworthy person, unfit for so great an honour, and unable for so vast a weight. Hereby they impair the credit of Christ and prudence of God. It must be an act of wisdom to entrust Christ with the weight of all his glory, since God can no more be deceived himself than he can deceive his creature. But doth that man think it so, that will not trust Christ with his soul according to those terms upon which he is offered? Doth he not reproach God of weakness by a refusal to imitate him, and deposit the concerns of his soul in the same hands wherein God hath trusted the honour of all his excellent perfections? If God depended upon Christ for his richest glory (for where there is a trust reposed there is a kind of dependence upon that person upon whom the trust is devolved), doth not that man count himself wiser than God, that will not depend upon Christ for the chiefest happiness? He cannot possibly be freed from the guilt of accusing God of an high imprudence, who will not believe in and trust that person to whom God hath given credit for all his glory; that thinks not Christ fit to be trusted by him, who hath been trusted by God with that which is of more value than the salvation of thousands of worlds, and by this ascribes a greater wisdom to his own reason and understanding than he will acknowledge in God's, when he seeth no comeliness in him in whom the wisdom of God beheld the greatest beauty and a fulness of grace and truth; when that which is gold in God's eye is dirt in his, and that which is dirt in God's eye is gold in his.

3. By this sin the unbeliever doth, as much as in him lies, frustrate the

design of God's glorious wisdom, in not consenting to that which the wisdom of God hath contrived. The wisdom of a man, as also the wisdom of God, lies in choosing the end and suiting the means. When we approve not of the one or contradict the other, we deny the fruit of a man's wisdom to him. In this case we do the like to God, when we neglect the end of his wisdom, salvation, and reject Christ, the means and way to it; it is to defeat his design, and tread under our feet the whole scheme of his counsel; for if all men were of the same mind, God would have discovered himself to be an all-wise God in redemption to no purpose. As faith is a justification of God in his counsel, so is unbelief a condemnation of God's counsel, and rendering it vain: Luke vii. 29, 30, 'They rejected the counsel of God in themselves.' It is spoken of the pharisees' not being baptised by John Baptist. They did not publicly contemn it, but their non-compliance with it was a rejecting immediately the doctrine and baptism of John, and ultimately the counsel of God. When God saw man sunk into misery by sin, and under an impossibility to recover himself, God in his boundless mercy and infinite wisdom contrived a way of restoration, proposeth it to men, and acquaints them with his resolve how he would have men saved; when men refuse it, rebel against God's decree, they reproach his counsel as well as his goodness. The word ἀπερνή, there used, signifies not a simple refusal, but rejecting a thing with reproach, and a dissolution of it, a bringing it to nought; as the word is used by the Septuagint, Ps. xxxiii. 10, 'The Lord brings the counsel of the heathen to nought.' As God brings the counsel of wicked men to nought, dissolves the whole frame of it, and makes their devices of no effect, so doth an unbeliever, as much as it is possible for him to do in himself, unravel the whole web of divine counsel, and would make it utterly insignificant. *Against themselves*; some render it *in themselves*, in their own thoughts by inward pride.

Well, then, consider how great a sin unbelief is in this regard.

Here is the wisdom of God making a match in heaven between the divinity and humanity,* Christ by the wisdom and will of God stripping himself and becoming a worm, that you may be as glorious as an angel. God might have employed his wisdom in contriving your ruin, but he sets it on work to build a scaffold for your salvation. Shall this wisdom be despised, which doth as far surpass the comprehensions of angels as the apprehensions of infants? When a scholar hath made a curious book, wherein he hath wrapped up all his learning, an artificer a beautiful watch, wherein he hath laid out all his skill, what a contempt of the learning of the one and art of the other is it to tear the book and break the watch! Oh how is the workmanship of God, which is admired by angels, dashed by unbelief! How is the unconceivable art of God blotted by the wilfulness of man! God may well say to us, Is the masterpiece of my counsel of so slight a value as not worth your consent? Have I caused the beams of my adorable wisdom to shine so bright in the gospel, to have no other return but a charge of folly? You see what blackness there is in the bowels of this sin.

Thirdly, It slights the goodness of God. Unbelief vilifies that which God designed to the praise and glory of his grace, and renders God cruel to his own Son, in being an unnecessary shedder of his Son's blood. Unbelief consists either in presumption or despair. Presumption on his absolute mercy, which, while it seems to magnify, it doth slight the constituted methods of his declared goodness in Christ; and, in a relying upon an undiscovered kindness, impairs his sovereignty, by prescribing other ways of

* Jenkin.

communicating himself to his creature than what he hath appointed ; or despair, which represents God under the appearance of a cruel tyrant, glad of the destruction of his creature, and changeth infinite mercy into infinite fury ; as if a great multitude of iniquities could throw mercy into the depths of the sea instead of being thrown by it ; as if the clouds could dissolve the sun instead of being melted by him. Presumption turns mercy into carelessness, and despair into cruelty. Unbelief, in the general notion of it, casts a scorn before men and angels upon the unsearchable riches of grace ; it would hew in pieces the throne of grace, and wipe off the blood of Christ wherewith the mercy-seat hath been sprinkled.

First, Thus it is a diabolical sin ; a receiving the devil's accusations of God before God's declarations of himself. When the devil was a murderer, he was a liar, John viii. 44 ; he belied God and murdered man. An unbeliever belies God's goodness and murders his own soul. He represented God an hard master, envying man a felicity belonging to him ; an unbeliever comes nearest his nature : he slighted God's goodness in forming man ; an unbeliever slights God's goodness in redeeming him. The one envied God the glory of his work, and the other envies God the glory of his grace.

Secondly, It is against absolute and sincere goodness. God can have no more addition to his perfections by redemption than he had by creation, but a more illustrious communication of them to his creatures. If he could have any real increase, he had not been the chiefest good, infinitely perfect. The sin might claim some excuse if God had any selfish aims, if his essential glory could have been made brighter by believing. But since he requires faith as a necessary disposition for receiving the communications of his favour, and what he doth offer is an advantage to the offender, none to the offerer, to convey a goodness to us, but not to receive anything from us, it is an inexcusable contempt of sincere goodness, a hewing at that redemption which grew up like a tall cedar from the root of pure mercy, when God needed not have sent his Son to die, nor a messenger to entreat, but have mustered up an army of destroying judgments against sinners.

Thirdly, Against the highest goodness that ever appeared to the sons of men. No greater act of love could spring from boundless eternity, than the parting with his only delight in heaven out of his bosom for the redemption of man ; so that he may well say, ' What could I have done more to my vineyard ? ' Isa. v. 4. Unbelief, then, is a reproach of that love which God designed to commend to the world in the mission of his Son ; and therefore the ingratitude in refusing it is as unparalleled in the rank of sins, as the kindness it slights is in the rank of mercy. It is against a law more animated with love than any other dispensation of God was filled with. The giving his Son to die was the most stupendous evidence of his goodness, whence faith draws the highest encouragement, and unbelief contracts the most dismal aggravation ; and the greater, since it is a contempt of a greater kindness to us than what was shewn to the ancient patriarchs, who only had a promise of the Messiah, when we have the performance ; yet naturally we do as frowardly reject the thing performed, as they did heartily embrace the assurance of it. Christ is a gift, Rom. v. 16, a gift of love, John iii. 16, the royallest gift of God, springing from unconceivable treasures of goodness. Is it a little sin to turn our backs upon the choicest gift that God can bestow, as though this pearl were of no more worth than a pebble ? What really is the language of this scorn, but as if a man should blasphemously say in so many words, God might have kept his gift to himself, and never have troubled me with such a present ?

Fourthly, A goodness ready to flow in upon us. The bosom of God is opened, the treasures of his goodness dispensed, the fountain of his grace running.* For men to be as deaf 'adders under such charms, blind moles under such beams, is as great a wonder of wickedness as the mercy is a miracle of goodness. And when the tenders of grace are made with that affection and importunity, that love rides upon wings and meets us at every turn; when we cannot open the Scripture but we see a transcript of his heart as it breathed toward us from eternity, and view the deep counsels of God, and the transactions of old between the Trinity about man's redemption laid open; how great a sin is this, to scorn treasures not only stored up, but ready to be given out, with the most pressing arguments and strongest obligations to an acceptance!

Fifthly, And this perpetually. It is an everlasting goodness, a kindness firmer than the foundations of the earth, or the battlements of the heaven, which God offers; it is an 'everlasting mercy,' Isa. liv. 7, like light in the sun that is never diminished, the element of fire never extinguished, water in the sea never emptied.

Sixthly, When we have absolute need of it. How inexcusable is the contempt, when rebels in chains trample under foot declarations of pardon! The necessity of the subject, as well as the excellency of the thing, and the unbounded goodness of the offerer; a necessity accompanied with an inevitable ruin without a leap into the arms of this goodness, still adds blackness to the refusal. How great a sin is it, then, to spurn at the beatings of God's heart, to account all the thoughts of mercy as if they had been thoughts of vanity, to spurn at that which angels wonder at and devils wish for? This is to treat unsearchable riches, bound up in Christ, as we would do the most loathsome dung. For God to find out this way, to offer his Son, to manifest such condescending grace as to entreat us to believe, and for us to make our excuses that we cannot come, to resolve not to handle the word of life, this, this is a sin of the deepest dye, this will at last silence the voice, of mercy, and rouse up a roaring fury. If we could unhinge the world, cast a blot upon the whole creation, raise a sedition of all creatures against God as Creator, dash in pieces the whole frame, consume it to ashes, that no relics of a God should appear in it, it could not be so high an indignity as the striking at his bowels. What is the glory of creation but as a mite to that of redemption? What is the destruction of the world to the contempt of his Son, the demolishing the work of his hands to the spurning at that of his heart?

Fourthly, Or, it disparageth the power and sufficiency of God. Man is naturally apt to question God's power, as though he were unable to bring his word into act. God, therefore, doth preface his covenant with Abraham by the title of his almightiness: Gen. xvii. 1, 'I am God almighty; walk before me, and be thou perfect.' All distrust grows up from a jealousy of weakness or wickedness in the object of it; either that a man is not honest and will not, or weak and cannot, perform. Unbelief, therefore, sometimes strips God of his power, and represents him impotent. It scantles almightiness according to the narrow apprehensions of the creature, as they, Ps. lxxviii. 41, who questioned whether that strength that had secured them in the Red Sea, and fed them in the wilderness, could conquer the possessors of Canaan and give them seisin of the country. As though that God who had bridled the waves could not as well fell down the Anakims, who breathed by his leave, as well as the waters moved by his providence. If there be a belief that God hath an intention to perform his promise, the diffidence doth

* Reynolds.

arise then from a doubt of his omnipotence ; if there be a belief of his veracity, there must be a jealousy of his ability. The apostle bottoms the faith of Abraham, whereby he believed he should have a son, upon the 'power of God,' Rom. iv. 21. Unbelief is then sometimes bottomed upon a secret unworthy conceit of inability in God, as if he could not be as great as his word ; as if he were, like the idols of men, without eyes to see and arms to relieve.

Indeed, all unbelief doth entrench upon God's power and sufficiency.

First, In not coming to him. It is a departure from God, not simply as God, but as a living God, Heb. iii. 12,* a God that hath life in himself, and is able to communicate it to others ; he departs from a spring to a puddle, and denies a fulness of life and satisfaction in that which he departs from. Certainly unbelief, as it respects Christ, is a virtual denial of his deity ; discards him from being the living God, from having a power and sufficiency to save, and as it is a sin against his divine person, is a wrong to the power, life, and sufficiency of God. He that runs from a prince that offers to protect him against his enemies, declares to all the world, that either the prince is not sincere in his offers, or unable to give him the protection he promiseth. All unbelief at least denies God the honour of his power, and doth depose him from the exercise of his saving omnipotence as to the unbeliever, and declares he can shift well enough with himself : 'He could not do any great work there because of their unbelief.' If all faith gives glory to the power of God, all unbelief vilifies it. If the power of God, as well as his faithfulness, be the object of faith in prayer (as it was of the faith of Christ: Heb. v. 7, 'He offered up prayers unto him that was able to save him'), then unbelief must needs strike at that which is the great ground and object of the grace which is contrary to it. An unbeliever thinks his soul safer in his own hands than in God's, and therefore will not commit it to his keeping. This is very visible in convinced souls before they come to Christ ; how often do they cry out, Can God pardon ? Can he remit ? Are not my sins too great for him ? Upon a diffidence of his power they are loath to lodge their souls in his arms ; they cannot believe he hath an arm strong enough to cast a blot and dash upon all their sins,† as though a mighty rock could not bear up a bruised reed.

Secondly, In trusting to something else. Man is like a vine, he cannot subsist without some prop. A trust and faith he must have, if not in God, in something else, either in himself or abroad ; he cannot depart from God, but he hath recourse to something else. Every motion hath a *terminus ad quem*, a term to which it tends. What then we trust unto, besides God and above God, we render in our thoughts more powerful than God. We cannot go to anything for relief with a neglect of God, but we depose the true God and create a new one ; we acknowledge a greater fulness in some inferior good than in an eternal spring. A man's own righteousness, weak ordinances relied on with a neglect of faith in God upon his own terms, are as well deified as the belly is made a god by a glutton, or money by a covetous person.

Thirdly, It receives an aggravation from the demonstrations of God's power exercised about Christ the object of faith. Unbelief is a contempt of all those attributes which were signally manifested about the effector of our redemption, whereof the power of God in assisting him in his whole course, and unloosing the bands of death, and setting him at his right hand, was none

* *Living God* is by interpreters understood as a reason to move them not to depart from God. It may also refer to a root of unbelief.

† S. Bolton.

of the least glorified in our redemption, since the power of God in raising Christ is set forth to us as a ground of faith for the imputation of righteousness: Rom. iv. 24, 'If we believe 'on him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.' His doing the greater work in the resurrection of Christ, wherein infinite power was manifested, considering what a charge of imputed guilt Christ lay under, is an evidence of his ability to do that which is less. Since it is thus, unbelief is a reflection upon this power of God, depriving it of the due glory which belongs to it. God hereby shewed himself willing to be our God upon our faith, as he shewed himself the God of Israel in bringing them out of Egypt; and doth frequently, upon their incredulity and murmuring, mind them of his power manifested in that deliverance, as if in all their infidelity and unbelief they did unworthily reflect upon the glory of his strength in that work. And, certainly, since we are commanded to believe in him who by the power of God raised the dead to life, restored sight to the blind, conquered the legions of hell; who hath done things impossible to be acted by the strength of men or angels; one that hath made the power of princes and the wisdom of the world to bend to him, and lie prostrate before him, and come under his footstool; the not believing in Christ is a denial and contempt of all this power, or a tacit ascribing those acts to some occult causes rather than the power of God. This is the language of unbelief. If those things were acted by the power of God, why do we not firmly, really believe, and act according to such a faith? If we do not, it is evident that we do not think such things were acted, or that the power of God was engaged in them. What an unworthy charge is this upon God, when we will believe man, who is able to do nothing without God, and will not believe in God, who hath manifested himself able to do all things by his own arm, without any partner?

Fifthly, It strikes at the sovereignty and authority of God. It is a debt we owe, as subjects, to God as our sovereign, to give credit to what he doth reveal, and to obey what he doth command. There is not only a revelation to encourage faith, but a command to enjoin it, 1 John iii. 23. If men believe not, they pretend some reason for their unbelief. Whatsoever any man's reason is, it deposeth God from the sovereignty in his soul; because it hath a greater power over him to cause him to refuse God, than God's word and command hath to make him accept his Son. He that comes not for shelter, recovery, and protection to that head God hath exalted, disowns the authority as well as the wisdom of that person who constituted him in that office and dignity. Since Christ is enthroned by God, and 'exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour,' Acts v. 31, and acts in it as *vicarius Dei*, God's vicegerent, he that refuseth to be gathered under his wing casts a contempt not only upon the person of Christ, but the authority of God, who fixed him in his royalty. Murder is a defacing the created image of God, unbelief is a contempt of the natural image of God, a treason against the Head of the redeemed world. It implies either a supremacy over God, or an equality with him; either that he hath not power to make a revelation, a law, or to enjoin a belief of it and obedience to it.

First, It is a contradiction to the resolute and fixed will of God. All unbelief is a dislike of God's terms, Rom. x. 3, a non-submission to the righteousness of God, affecting a power of choice ourselves, debasing the royal authority to our demands, and that not to the demands of our reason, but of our lust. It is to make the Lord of glory kiss the sceptre of our wills, and his sheaf bow down to ours. We would be blotting out what articles he hath drawn, and putting in what conditions we please, when we consent not to what he proposeth, and submit not to what he commands. Is not this

to pull down his colours, and set up our own? It is not a simple disobedience, but an evasion of his authority, not to acquiesce in and comply with his conditions, imposing our own upon him, and indenting with him. We will have so much of Christ, and so much of our own righteousness to join with him. Other sins are against his sovereignty as a creator and a lawgiver, this against his sovereignty in a merciful design to reduce his creature to its happiness as well as duty. This sin therefore implies a denial of God's dominion, or having anything to do with his creature. It opposeth the return of the soul under his sceptre, and would keep man at an irreconcilable distance from God. How malicious would this contradiction be, if our redemption had proceeded from some other hand! Such an efflux of goodness, in restoring from slavery upon such light conditions, would have deserved from us an entire subjection. Such a mercy had merited an absolute sovereignty. How much more malicious is it against God, who besides the authority merited by this mercy, has naturally an absolute supremacy over us!

Secondly, It is an imitation of Adam's rebellion against God, in being a god to ourselves, or choosing another. God will have the soul of man in a state of dependence on him; it cannot be otherwise, unless man were a god. To make an independent creature is a contradiction, for that is to make him a god. Adam's sin seemed to be an affecting an equality with God, to be God's companion and equal in knowledge, which would infer an equality in everything else: Gen. iii. 5, 'You shall be as gods,' or *Elohim*, 'as God'; not as the angels, for God interprets it an affectation of equality with himself in the ironical speech, ver. 22, 'The Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us.' Unbelief would still keep up this independency which Adam aimed at, and whereby he quenched his own happiness and that of his posterity, and attempts a salvation by his own righteousness, which God denied him when he drove him out of paradise, that he might not invade the tree of life, after the new covenant made with him of faith in Christ, and so have any hope to attain eternal life by any other means than what God had proposed. This sin is an approbation of Adam's act, in an imitation of it. Pride against God doth as necessarily attend unbelief now as it did then. Unbelief was the first sin, and pride was the first-born of it. Adam first cast away his belief of the precept, and flung away humility at the heels of it.

Thirdly, Unbelief renders God, as much as in it lies, unworthy of any sovereignty. It doth not only deny his authority, but it represents him as false, foolish, careless, cruel to his own Son, and strips him of the honour of his truth, the glory of his wisdom, the designs of his grace, the arm of his power; and so represents him unworthy of obedience from the unbeliever himself or from any else. For who can be obliged in reason to obey a God so coloured as unbelief represents him, one that is not to be credited, that is mistaken in his contrivances, that hath no thoughts of goodness, that is too weak to protect his creature? Nay, God himself would not judge himself fit to be obeyed, if he were any of those which this sin would fasten upon him, since all the perfections in God which are abused by it are declared in Scripture as inducements to obedience; and God makes appeals to the reason of men to judge of his faithfulness, righteousness, wisdom, and goodness in them. To call a prince a fool is by the law of some countries made high treason, because such language concludes the prince incapable of government. The wiser heathens looked upon the fabulous gods of the vulgar, being represented vicious, unworthy of any acknowledgment, and ridiculous deities. Unbelief renders God ridiculous to the world, and more among us than among the

heathens, who have absolutely denied Christ to be the Redeemer and Son of God; for they own not the revelation from God, and therefore cast not that imputation upon him, as the practical infidelity of those that believe it to be God's revelation doth; for they acknowledge it in a pretended opinion to be the revelation of God, yet act as though there were nothing but falsity, folly, and unrighteousness in the whole design.

Sixthly, It affronts the holiness and righteousness of God. If the setting forth Christ to be a propitiation for sin was to declare his righteousness, Rom. iii. 25, *i. e.* his holiness as well as his justice, what doth unbelief signify but that this act was unrighteous in God, that God was not holy and righteous in punishing his Son as our surety? Continuance in a state of nature by unbelief, after the revelation of God's holiness in so eminent a manner, is an approbation of that sin Christ suffered to expiate, a preferring it before the imitation of God's holiness, so much glorified in the death of his Son; an affecting that which is the just object of God's disaffection, since God, in the highest manner that possible can be, yea more than in the damnation of the whole world, hath manifested his hatred of sin in the death of Christ. The keeping up notoriously gross practices, or unbelief, though attended with morality, is a valuing a state of nature, against which God hath manifested his hatred; and therefore unbelief, after the declaration of Christ, draws a greater guilt upon a man than all sins before the coming of Christ in the flesh, and the declarations of the gospel.

Seventhly, It is a stripping God, as much as lies in man, of all his delight. The service Christ did, which was delightful to God, is contemptible to an unbeliever. God's delight and his stand in direct opposition; it is a representing God cruel to the object of his delight; it makes God a murderer of his Son; it taxeth him with the greatest act of cruelty in sacrificing his obedient Son, the object of his delight, and renders that act of God, which was the greatest pity to sinners and the glory of his mercy wherein he rejoiceth, not only a vain and a fruitless, but a tyrannical execution.

First, It is a refusal of Christ, the 'man that is God's fellow,' Zech. xiii. 2, his 'daily delight,' Prov. viii.; it is contrary to that which is most dear to God, slights that which is most precious in his esteem. It was all God's aim in all his actions in the world, ever since the first promise, to magnify himself in his Son. The revelation of his righteousness in and through him, and the compliance of men with it, was the chief end of God in the manifestation of Christ to the world. The conversions of men to him are his pleasure: Isa. liii. 10, 'The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.' What, then, is this sin, but a thwarting God in his main end; robbing him of the fruit of his counsel, the incomes of his love; making him a loser by his grace; depriving him of a joy in his works, by slighting Christ, who is the centre of his delight, the joy of his heart, the top of his glory; chasing away all gladness from his soul, that he should have no pleasure in that which he hath contrived with so much wisdom, effected with so much power, but have an eternal grief in the miscarriage of his work? It is true this cannot be actually done; the counsel of the Lord stands firm, the delight of God is above the injuries of men; but this is in the nature of unbelief; and if this sin should have reigned in Adam, and every branch of him, from the beginning of the world to the last man born upon the earth, would not this be the effect of it? Therefore every unbeliever, as to his part, doth that which would really be the issue if all the sons of Adam were in his state. It frustrates the expectation of God, because God, in sending Christ, had an expectation that men would lay down their arms, accept of peace, reverence his Son, and manifest a joy in the reception of him suitable to the joy of

God in his mission : Mat. xxi. 37, 'But last of all he sent his son, saying, they will reverence my son.'

Secondly, It is a privation of faith, a grace so pleasing to God. Next to the delight God hath in Christ, because of the glory accruing to him by it, he hath a delight in faith, because it owns the glory of God in the redemption by his Son, and honours those attributes in a peculiar manner which were eminent in it. Is there any grace he is more pleased with than faith? Is there any grace he hath put such a dignity upon? It is called a justifying faith, Rom. v. 1, a kind of an incommunicable attribute of it; other graces are the attendants, this the mistress. God is so infinitely pleased with it, as it stands in relation to the object, Christ crucified, that upon the appearance of it with a Christ lifted up in its hands, God blots out all the sins that stand upon record, accounts the soul righteous, opens his arms to embrace it, and seems to own it as a recompence for all the wrong he hath sustained. And what a delight it is to Christ I shall have occasion to shew afterward. The soul that draws back by unbelief affords God no pleasure: Heb. x. 38, 'If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.' It deprives God of all pleasure in his creature; it disturbs the rest of God. This is spoken of those that were within the church, and made profession of Christianity.

Thirdly, As it is a refusal of his mercy in Christ. Because mercy is the perfection he delighted to manifest in Christ, Micah vii. 18, it bars all communications of it to such a soul, because he hath linked his mercy only to faith in Christ, where the gospel is revealed. So that when Christ is not believed in, the unbeliever, as far as in his power, frustrates the end of God in sending Christ, deprives him of that delightful glory he intended by his Son's death, makes void the merciful contrivance of God from eternity, which was the stupefaction of angels, the envy of devils, the expectation of the ancient fathers, and the satisfaction of believers, and, above all, the delight and glory of God. So that you see what a vast injury unbelief offers to God.

Secondly, It is a sin peculiarly against Christ. It is a piercing him again, Zech xii. 10. Some think this prophecy respects, as to the time, the day of judgment; others, the time of Christ's being upon the cross. It respects, I suppose, some time between. The prophet speaks of Christ's piercing as a thing past; and at the time of his passion, there was not such a mourning among the Jews as is here described; neither doth it respect the times of the day of judgment. The mourning, then, of the condemned world, shall not be from a spirit of grace and supplication, but from a spirit of horror and despair. The result will be, since those that had not an hand in the death of Christ's body are said here to pierce Christ, it must be understood of a piercing by unbelief, which is an approbation of the Jews' cruelty towards him. Any man is guilty of an act who doth approve an act, though he was not formally an agent in it. And indeed the Jews did not actually pierce him, but the hand of a Roman soldier; yet they are said to do it, because they consented to the act. It is a piercing of Christ.* An unbeliever is a Jew in his heart and life, though a Christian in profession; though he doth verbally acknowledge the coming of Christ, he doth really deny it. It is an unworthy usage of Christ; it is a using him, as he speaks of himself in the Psalms, as 'a worm and no man,' trampling upon him with more violence and contempt than they would upon a worm. The vilest man in the world never suffered so many reproaches as Christ hath suffered by

* נָקַב, which signifies *perforare*, is put for βλασφημεῖν, Lev. xxiv. 11.—*Grotius in Zech. xii. 10.*

notional and practical incredulity since he went to heaven. Judas, that betrayed him, was never so much hated by the highest professor and sincerest Christian, as Christ betrayed by him is slighted by unbelief, as if he were set up for a sign to be spoken against. 'As his visage was marred more than any man's' while he was upon the earth, Isa. lii. 14, so his glory is stained more than any man's since he went to heaven. The natural darkness of men is so thick, that instead of being dissipated by the light, as other darkness is, it is so obstinate, that it excludes all the divine brightness of Christ from the understanding and consciences of the most part of men:* John i. 5, 'The light shines in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not.' It contemns by a desperate ingratitude the person of the Son of God, the truth of his word, the bowels of his love, the power of his miracles, the ministry of his death, the glory of his ascension, and the majesty of his offices; and accounts the whole history of the gospel no better than a narration of lies.

And though men never saw the person of Christ, yet they offer violence to it by slighting the marks of it he hath left in the world. As a man is guilty of treason by abusing the statue or image of the prince, by defacing his seal, though he never saw the person of the prince; † he violates his authority that regards it not, owns not any act of grace from him, though he never saw his face; so are men guilty of trampling on the blood of Christ when they count it as a trifle, and unprofitable for their salvation, though they never saw Christ, nor ever had any communion with him, Heb. x. 29, when they 'count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing.'

First, It is a nullifying the work of his mediation and death. It denies him the honour of his meritorious passion, vilifies the glory of his mediation, from the first counsel to the last act, sheds his blood afresh, and pours it slightly upon the ground, and tramples that inestimable sacrifice like dirt under the feet. No sin doth so immediately oppose Christ as mediator. This is the great antichrist in the world; though this sin, among Christians at large, denies him not in his person, it doth in his offices. As faith puts a value upon the priesthood of Christ, eyes his death as a perfect atonement, leans upon him as a sacrifice upon the cross, and an advocate in heaven; so unbelief, being contrary to this grace, undervalues all that faith esteems. It frustrates the end of his coming, which was to reduce us to God, from whom we had receded by unworthy jealousies of him.

First, It renders the design of his coming a vanity, when it receives not the fruits of it. As he that will not use the creatures for those ends for which God created them, that shuts his eyes against the sun, that stops his mouth wilfully against his appointed food, writes a vanity upon the creation of God; so he that doth not receive Christ upon those terms God offers him, and for those ends God sets him forth, writes vanity upon the whole work of redemption, and 'makes the grace of God to be in vain,' 2 Cor. vi. 1. Neither the pains of Christ, the blood of Christ, nor the righteousness of Christ, attain their end in such a person, who offers to him the indignity of unbelief, and makes him 'spend his strength in vain and for nought,' Isa. xlix. 4. Some think it is Christ's complaint of the incredulity of the Jews, and it will extend to all men that make no account of the travail of his soul, his unwearièd pains and bloody passion, whereby they argue him to be a fruitless and a needless mediator, working miracles and shedding his blood to no purpose; and fix themselves in a state, as if Christ had never died in respect of benefit, though not in regard of guilt.

* Amyraut. in loc.

† Maccov. Metaphys. lib. i. cap. xii.

Secondly, It is a vilifying the price of redemption;* accounting that blood wherein Christ was sanctified, demonstrated to be the Son of God and Saviour of the world, and for which he was absolved from guilt, and counted righteous before God, and advanced that he might save them that come unto God by him, a common, an inefficacious thing, Heb. ix. 28.

Thirdly, Yea, a regarding it as the blood of a malefactor. It is impossible that an unbeliever can regard it only as the blood of an innocent man, that may cry for vengeance like Abel's, and be as weak as Abel's blood to purchase salvation for the soul. It is impossible that this, though bad enough, in denying the efficacy of his blood, can only be the reflection; but he must needs regard it as the blood of the highest malefactor that ever yet was in the world. In not accepting it as the blood of God, he renders Christ more criminal than Judas, and chargeth him with a falsity in declaring himself to be the Son of God, and the mediator of the world. If Christ be the Son of God, and the mediator of the world, why is he not cordially owned to be so? If he be not accepted heartily under those notions, the refusal of him declares he is not the person and officer of God, as he affirmed himself to be, and so renders Christ, not only void of innocence, but guilty of the highest affront to the majesty of God. He that refuseth him, disowns his filiation, denies him to be the Son of God, sees not a glory in him 'as of the only begotten of the Father,' John i. 14; what faith the apostle asserts,† unbelief denies. An unbeliever implies the truth of what the Jews falsely writ to the synagogues after the death of Christ, that he was *ἄθεος καὶ ἄνομος*, an atheist.‡

Thus do all persons that think to attain salvation by any righteousness of their own. Whosoever thinks he is able to enrich himself with spiritual blessings, to weave a covering of his own righteousness, and make payments of his old debts by a heap of good works, despiseth Christ's payment, slights the righteousness of the God of heaven, abuseth that Saviour who came to knock off our bolts, heal our wounds, and clothe our souls. He that thinks to enter into heaven, and not by him, is a thief and a robber; he robs God of the honour of his own constitution, and Christ of the glory of his mediatory office, and the right of his purchase. And thus do all persons who walk contrary to the end of Christ's coming, who are enemies to that spiritual life Christ came to set up, and friends to that sensual life he came to pull down. Such may pretend friendship to his person, but are enemies to his cross, Philip. iii. 18, 19; they defame the end of his suffering, as much as the Jews defamed him in it.

Secondly, It is a denying the love of Christ. It is a stab at his heart, an outrage of his tender bowels. He suffered willingly all those torments which were inflicted on him, to remove from us the necessity of suffering, which sin had involved us in, had he not stepped in to take our burdens upon his own shoulders. If we will not believe in him, we deny those choice affections which engaged him in the undertaking, and were illustrious in the execution. It is as if we should think the covenant of grace more severe than that of works; as if Christ were our enemy rather than our Redeemer, and came rather to kindle a hell for our torment, than to quench hell for us by his blood; as if he came to suffer for our misery, and not for our happiness. Was there any need of his coming to make us more miserable than we were before? Did it consist with the goodness of God to expose his Son to suffering, to make the creature more wretched, since the misery we were sunk into was

* Cocceius de Fœde. Theſ. 200.

† Qu. 'what the apostle asserts'?—ED.

‡ Grot. in Mat. xxvii. 33.

more than we were able to bear? If it were an act of love in Christ, why is he not embraced by the choicest and most affectionate faith? If he be not thus embraced, it clearly implies that you have no imagination of any affection in him, that he is rather a formidable person than an affectionate Saviour. It is as great a slight of his love, as if he should open heaven and make the proffers of the gospel from thence. If Christ should speak from heaven in an audible voice, and propound the gospel articles in the most affectionate strains, would not the contempt of it be judged by all men to be an ungrateful scorn of his love? He doth speak from heaven in his word, as really as he bled upon the cross in his person (Heb. xii. 15, 'If we turn away from him that speaks from heaven'), and unbelief doth insolently abuse the riches of his unspeakable goodness, and slight the blood shed with an adorable love, without which the anger of God could not be appeased, nor the fire of hell, prepared for sinners, extinguished, without which the filthiness of the soul could not be cleansed, nor the glories of heaven opened. In despising this love, we despise all the fruits of it which the believer enjoys. Since Christ was so willing to offer up himself to death that we might be freed, and the power of the devil put to an end in us, the keeping up the power of the devil in its full strength, as unbelief doth, is a slighting the main kindness our great benefactor intended to bestow upon us.

Thirdly, It denies the wisdom of Christ. It chargeth him with folly and inconsiderateness, in undertaking a task that was not worth his pains, in suffering for the purchase of pardon and salvation, which might be gained without so much ado. What did Christ aim at in the shedding of his blood, but the appeasing of the wrath of God, sanctification of the souls of men, the opening the gates of heaven, which justice, provoked by sin, had barred against them? If men do not believe, certainly they have some conceits, that either these benefits are not desirable and worth the inquiring after, and labouring for, or that they may be procured by other means at an easier rate than faith in the blood of Christ. And is not this a charge of folly brought against Christ, who paid so dear for that, which they suppose they can have upon a cheaper account, and without being beholden to him? Thus some interpret that place, Isa. xlii. 19, 'Who is blind as my servant, or deaf as my messenger that I have sent? who is blind as the Lord's servant?' As if God should introduce the unbelieving Jews, charging Christ with blindness and folly, who is the wisdom of God, and regarding that as contemptible, which was honourable in God's account. And, indeed, it seems to be the true sense of the place, since all the foregoing part of the chapter is a proclaiming of Christ, who, ver. 1, is particularly called God's servant. An unbeliever injures the wisdom of Christ in not following his pattern; he trusted God upon his bare word, and oath, and promises of assistance in his work, and a good issue and success. He that will not give credit to the promise of God for salvation by Christ, implies that God is unworthy to be trusted, that his word is of no value, that all that trust him are unwise, and consequently that Christ himself, who exercised the greatest trust of any in the world, was the most unwise of any. When we follow not the practice of another, we imply some defect in the wisdom of that person we refuse to imitate. This is truly the language of unbelief; and the Gentiles at the first preaching of Christ were so besotted with their own imaginary wisdom, that they thought the preaching of the cross foolishness, and a mere extravagancy of man.

Fourthly, It wrongs the authority of Christ. It receives an aggravation from the greatness of the person that published the doctrine of faith. All laws are to be attended with a greater veneration, by how much the more

eminent the wisdom and authority of the person is. It was the Son of God who died by the command and commission of the Father. It is the Son of God that hath left the command of faith upon record. It is the Son of God who is the object of that faith we are commanded to have and exercise. The not believing, therefore, is a crime of the highest nature, in denying all the authority derived to Christ from the Father. Upon this score Christ chargeth the unbelieving Jews: John v. 43, 'I am come in my Father's name, and you receive me not;' you have evident marks of a divine authority in me;* but because my doctrine accords not with the interests of your ambition and imperious lusts, therefore you receive me not. 'If another shall come in his own name,' who shall flatter your ambition, and preserve the dominion of your beloved lusts, 'him you will receive.' Thus is the authority of Christ slighted by this sin, when the terms upon which he offers himself are disliked, when we would bring down Christ from his throne, to condescend to the conditions we would impose upon him; when we set the crown upon the head of some darling sin, which we should set upon the head of Christ.

Fifthly, It denies the excellency of Christ. To work faith there is necessary, first, a clear proposal of the object, supported with such reasons and allurements that have a strength in themselves to work upon the mind. But unbelief denies any such attractives in the nature of the object presented, to move the will to the embracing of it; it sees more righteousness in a Barabas, soul-murdering lusts, than in a soul-saving Redeemer, when all the labour, study, thoughts, are for the pleasures of sin, the satisfaction of self, the increase of profit, and men scarce let Christ have a thousandth part of the thoughts. If druff and swill be preferred before a pearl, it is because a swine sees no excellency in it. As faith 'counts all things dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ,' Philip. iii. 8; so unbelief accounts the person, offices, doctrine, and laws of Christ dung and dross in comparison of the excellency of self-righteousness, self-wisdom, self-dependence, pleasing temptations, and gilded nothings. As faith accounts all things dross to Jesus Christ, so unbelief accounts Christ dross to self. How injurious is this to the worth of an heavenly object! to value a feather above a mountain of gold, a box of poison before a pearl of the greatest price, when nothing can come in competition with him, but what is infinitely inferior to him! This unbelief sees no glory, tastes no pleasure, conceives no fulness, in that which God hath furnished with an unconceivable glory, and rests in with an eternal delight; it represents Christ empty, whom God stored with a communicable fulness, a poor nothing who is a rich treasure; it esteems Christ, who is an overflowing fountain, as if he were no better than a broken cistern. It is most certain that, while God is not chiefly affected, whatsoever is in esteem above him is valued as more excellent than God; so when Christ is not trusted, but a creature hung upon as the object of reliance, that creature so received is more excellent in esteem than that Christ who is refused.

Sixthly, It denies the sufficiency of Christ: the greatness of his priesthood, the fulness of his satisfaction, the sufficiency of him as the Son of God to make a prevailing intercession, as if he had not a fulness of living waters to bestow, or not goodness enough to communicate them; as though he were too scanty to free us from all misery, and fill us with all felicity. Where no trust is reposed in him, it implies that no benefit can be expected from him. The satisfaction of Christ was more efficacious to take away sin and please God, than the sin of man had guilt to displease him, and of more value to outweigh the sins of the whole world, than they had weight to press man down to the lake of fire; because of the marriage between the divinity and

* Amyraut in loc.

the humanity, whereby that person, who was man, was infinite in regard of his divine nature. Faith owns the fulness of this satisfaction, pleads it to God, acquiesceth in it. What doth unbelief? It either thinks the satisfaction too short, or that a man hath no need of it, or that he hath some other invention to content the creditor; but the first is as likely as any else, for, since Abraham's faith respected the power of God, Rom. iv. 21, unbelief questions the ability of God. The apostle, pressing the Jews with many arguments to make them sensible of the ability of Christ to 'save them to the utmost,' Heb. vii. 25, witnesseth that the secret sentiment in the heart of this sin is the insufficiency of the blood of Christ for this great end of salvation: that it is of no more efficacy to the purging away of sin than the blood of bulls and goats; nor can reach the soul any more than the waters of a river can purge the filthiness of the Spirit. This sin therefore receives a mighty aggravation from the dignity of Christ's person, whereby he was able to make a valuable satisfaction, and actually did so. It is a 'light esteem of the rock of salvation,' Deut. xxxii. 15, שֵׁעָתוֹ of his Jesus who conducted them in the wilderness; as if the rock of God's salvation had no more strength than a feeble pebble. It disgraceth his power in the whole web of his design, as if his merit were not strong enough, his satisfaction full enough, to procure our discharge, but we must have something of our own to eke it out. The blood of Christ cries to us, we regard it not; it streams out fresh from his heart in the virtue of it, and flows through the pipes of the gospel in the offers of it, yet unbelief stops the ears against the voice, shuts the heart against the approach of it, as if the sacrifice of Christ were a sacrifice of no value. And since this sin denies the virtue of the sacrifice of the Son of God for the expiation of sin, the justification and sanctification of the soul, it would expose him to another death to make his blood efficacious; since there is no means imaginable for the attaining those ends but the death of the Son of God.

Seventhly, It denies Christ his right and reward. The restoration of souls is a part of his reward for his work: Isa. liii. 11, 'He shall be satisfied with the travail of his soul;' God promised it to him. Unbelief would make Christ a loser, as well as God a liar; for, if this leprosy did totally overspread the hearts of every son of Adam, all the travail of Christ's soul would have been in the service of the devil. Christ would take the pains, and the devil have the harvest. What an injury is this, to steal Christ's reward from him, to bestow it upon his enemy; to gratify the destroyer, as though they envied the honour of the Redeemer! It is his glory to have a numerous posterity; when 'he was taken from prison and judgment, who shall declare his generation?' Isa. liii. 8. Generations, in Scripture, are put for a people or family: 'the generations of Adam,' 'the generations of Noah,' *i. e.* the posterity of Adam and Noah. It is the glory of Christ to have his dying body spring up into a multiplied seed: John xii. 23, 24, 'The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.' How? In his dying, that he may bring forth much fruit, as ver. 24 intimates. The occasion of our Saviour's speech was the desire of some Greeks to see him, ver. 20, and, in his answer, he intimates that the conversion of the Gentiles after his death was part of his glory, and the end of his death was to draw a train of believing disciples to him, ver. 32. If the faith of men makes the thoughts of Christ's death pleasant, and the death itself glorious to him, unbelief doth in its nature snatch this honour from Christ, and would hale him down from heaven, to stake him in a humiliation-state for ever, to continue him the scorn and derision of men, which, as it is injustice in depriving him of his right, is also ingratitude to him, who hath done so much to make himself dear to men.

If the hire of a labourer was to be given him the same day, and the sun was not to go down upon it, because he had 'set his heart upon it, and lest he cry against thee to the Lord, and it be sin unto thee,' Deut. xxiv. 15; if the depriving a labourer of his hire, for a small time, is a sin God marks, how black is that sin in the eye of God, which hath not once, but often, defrauded Christ of the hire he laboured for, both in his life and death, and will not return the soul to him for whose welfare he travailed? What is this but to defeat him of the fruit of his sweat, pain, blood and death, to disappoint him of the satisfaction he hath set his heart upon; or, as it is in the Hebrew, *lifted up* his soul unto, has a vehement desire for? What made him bear up in his dreadful sufferings, but the joy and hopes of having a generation to serve him? It was to this purpose he did groan and bleed. But unbelief would have him an unattended Redeemer, a man of sorrows without a spark of joy, when it will not come to Christ that the soul might have life, and Christ might have glory.

Eighthly, It puts Christ to the greatest grief. His soul was never more deeply impressed with grief before the hour of his passion than when he saw men would not come to him that they might have life. That his table was spread, and his invited guests would not accept of his feasts, did both grieve and incense him. When he gave his disciples so sharp a check, and calls them fools, it was not for their timorous and ungrateful forsaking him, but for their slowness of heart in believing, Luke xxiv. 25. Not their leaving him in the hands of his enemies, or their present charging him with imposture, but their not giving credit to what was predicted of him by the prophets. It was not the buffets he received, the thorns whereby he smarted, the reproaches of his enemies, the wounds from the hands of the soldiers, which did so much damp his soul, as the unbelief of his disciples; he seemed not to be afflicted with them so much as with this. This seems as grievous to him as the wrath of his Father, not to be trusted, and to be charged with falsity. To be ungratefully dealt with is more bitter to a generous spirit than death. This grieved him before ever he came into the world, when he conducted the incredulous generation of the Israelites through the wilderness;* it may now grieve him more, since it is against more incomparable marks of his kindness. Is there any grace that Christ doth more earnestly inquire after than that of faith? If he finds it, he regards nothing else, John ix. 35. When he had found him that was excommunicated by the pharisees, he saith, 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' He inquires not after this poor man's zeal in defending him so strenuously before the council, vers. 30-33. 'Dost thou believe?' is the only question he asks him in order to his admission into his family. What other grace doth he admire in the centurion? Mat. viii. 10. Humility, marching in the first rank, 'I am not worthy,' &c. seems more obvious to view. But Christ looks at the faith which gave birth to his humility. If faith be the grace on which he fixeth his eye with affection and delight, unbelief must be the object of his greatest grief as well as anger; it is a grieving him after God hath wiped tears from his eyes.

3. As unbelief is an injury to God, as it is a particular injury to Christ, so it is also a wrong to the Spirit of God. It slights the witness he bears by his common illuminations to the dignity of Christ and the truths of the gospel, and therefore when men refuse to yield obedience to the terms of the gospel, they are said to 'resist the Holy Ghost,' Acts iii. 51. It is a sin more against the Spirit of God than any; it is not *the* sin against the Holy Ghost, but the sin against the Holy Ghost may be without many

* Heb. iii. 10, 17, I am grieved with this generation. And forty years was he grieved for their unbelief, ver. 19.

other sins, as it was in the pharisees, who were free from many immoral vices, but it cannot be without this as the main ingredient. It is a sin more against the Spirit of God than any, because it is the peculiar office of the Spirit to receive of Christ's, and shew it to men, to declare of the things of Christ, to bring the truths of Christ to a remembrance, to convince men of the necessity of Christ and his righteousness. Unbelief crosseth all those purposes of the Holy Ghost, the end of his coming into the world, writes vanity and folly upon his mission, by not subscribing to his motions. As it reflects upon the Father for sending Christ, so it reflects both upon the Father and the Son for sending the Holy Ghost. The more honourable the messenger is, the more base is the affront both to the messenger and to him that sent him. This sin, as it is against Christ, is also against the Spirit of God, because Christ was fitted by the Spirit, and furnished with all fulness in his human nature, for the accomplishment of his work in the world. It was by the strength of the Spirit that he first entered the lists with our great enemy, who had first moved the rebellion of man, Mat. iv. 1, and the same Spirit acted Christ in the whole course of his prophetic office. It was through the eternal Spirit that he offered up himself a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, Heb. ix. 14; but it is also more immediately against the Spirit exhorting to faith, pressing the doctrine and truths of Christ upon the souls of men, repeating again and again the things which concern salvation, offering himself to change the soul that is without form and void into a comely and beautiful workmanship. How great is this sin, then, that gives the lie to the Spirit of truth, who is infallible himself and cannot deceive, nor could no more be employed about a trivial and unworthy affair than Christ about an unnecessary redemption! And since this sin is that which the Spirit directs his battery against, it is more peculiarly a maintaining the fort against the power of heaven and the summons of that Spirit, whose least motions we ought to obey to a full surrender. To cast away his solicitations, to put bars in his way to hinder him an entry, is to quench the Spirit, 1 Thes. v. 19, as if the resisting his office were a blowing out his life, and as much a stifling of him in the soul as when the Jewish fury crucified Christ upon the cross. This is as great a sin, as appears by the punishment of the Jews, who were not cast off so much for the crucifying the Lord of life as for resisting the Spirit, who would have applied for their cure that blood they had shed in their madness. Thus Stephen charged them when they stoned him, 'Ye always resist the Holy Ghost.' The Spirit is the ambassador of the Father and the Son too; he is sent by the Father, John xiv. 26, 'whom the Father will send in my name;' and sent by Christ, chap. xv. 26, 'whom I will send unto you from the Father.' To stand against an ambassador that represents two states or princes is more than to resist him that represents only one. Christ was sent by the Father, and it is nowhere in Scripture said that the Spirit sent Christ, though it was given to him, not by measure, for the fitting him for his mediatory work, and so it is against the Spirit, as furnishing Christ with gifts and graces for his employment. But there is a further aggravation in its redounding upon the Holy Ghost, as authoritatively sent both by the Father and the Son, to build upon that foundation which Christ laid.

II. The second thing in the demonstration of the sinfulness of this sin was, that it is as bad, or worse, than the sin of the Jews in crucifying Christ.

It is as bad as the Jews' crucifying Christ. It is as if we had been partners with that cursed generation at Jerusalem, that stained their hands in

the blood of the Son of God. There is a spiritual crucifixion of Christ as well as a corporal one: Rev. xi. 8, 'And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.' It is a speech concerning the death of the witnesses, and a description of Rome, the seat of antichrist. As it is spiritually called Sodom, and spiritually called Egypt, so the crucifixion may be understood spiritually, though there be something also literal in it; for Christ may be said to be crucified at Rome, not in regard of the place, where Christ never was, but in regard of the Roman authority, whereby he suffered, all power of capital punishment being taken away from the Jews after their subjection to the Roman empire. The crime pretended against him was against Cæsar, the Roman magistrate; he was crucified by Pilate, a Roman president, and crucifixion was a Roman punishment. It is called Sodom because of luxury and lust, in regard of the idolatry of it, which is spiritual uncleanness (as Jerusalem is called Sodom in regard of her filthiness, Isa. i. 10, Isa. iii. 9, Ezek. xvi. 49, 50), and called Egypt in regard of idolatry, and in regard of the similitude between the oppressions of Israel in Egypt, and Christians under the Roman jurisdiction. Now, as the name of one place is metaphorically translated to another, because of the likeness of their sin, so, by the same rule, the similitude in sin transfers the name of one sin to another. Christ is crucified by the Romish power, when he is deprived of the honour of his mediatory office, by justling in the intercessions of the virgin and other saints; of the glory of his satisfaction, in mingling with it the merits of other creatures; in his kingly office, by assuming the power of dispensations for sin, and pardoning the punishment due by his laws to it. And Christ is as much crucified by an unbeliever, when he rejects or doth not accept him as a sufficient sacrifice, a propitiating priest, a commanding king, and a teaching prophet. A man is as deeply guilty of crucifying Christ in a spiritual manner, as the Jews were in the reproaches and scoffs of him, and the nailing him to the tree. As there is a spiritual entertainment of Christ, and supping with him by believing, and a spiritual bringing forth Christ in the womb of a soul, as a mother doth an infant, so there is a spiritual lifting up Christ upon the cross, and piercing his side.

Another place which proves this, is 1 Cor. xi. 27, 'Whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.' If a man hath the guilt of any known sin upon him unrepented of, if he comes not with a suitable frame, when he hath no high thoughts of the excellency of Christ's body in the sacrament, he is partaker of the Jewish crime instead of a Saviour's merit, and acts as one that nailed him to the cross, and pierced his side,—as an affront to the picture or statue of a prince is interpreted an affront to his person. Now if the unworthy receiving the signs of the body and blood of Christ, when a man hath no formal intent to be guilty of so great a crime in his approach, but he hath some pretences of holy ends, and addresses himself to it with some kind of seeming seriousness, make him guilty of the death of Christ, how much more must he be guilty of it, who hath no value for it, doth not accept of it as the death of the Son of God, and mediator of the world?*

He intimates that Christ did not suffer as a propitiation for sin, but as a malefactor, and so is like to them that crucified him. So that there are other ways of being counted before God the murderers of Christ, than if our hands had been as deeply imbrued in the blood which ran in the veins of his body, as the hands of the Jews were. It is true, all had a hand in the killing Christ, for our sins armed the hands of the executioners; they put

* Vatabl. in loc.

the hammer into the right hand of the instruments, and the nails into their left hand, and, as it were, compelled their cursed hands to pierce his body.* Our sins demanded the death of the Son of God. But only unbelievers are guilty of his death, because they make that blood to be shed again in vain, which they shed when he was crucified for them.

1. Unbelief is as bad as the Jews' act in crucifying him.
2. It is worse.

1. It is as bad, in being a virtual approbation of what they did. Every voluntary sin is a justification of all acts of the same nature done in the world. The sin of the Jews was a justifying the sins of Samaria and Sodom: Ezek. xvi. 51, 'Thou hast justified thy sisters in all thy abominations;' those sisters, ver. 46, were Samaria and Sodom.

(1.) It comes from the same root. There is the same disposition of soul in one as in the other. They were no more of Adam's descent than we are, and no more corrupted in their nature than any other nation. We have no more good naturally than was to be found among them, and they had no more evil naturally than what is to be found among us. Unbelief was the principle from whence all their rigour against him did arise; and had they not first been unbelievers, they had not been the Redeemer's murderers.

If there be the same disposition, and an interpretative approbation of an act, there is the same guilt - the exact eye of God's justice; for God doth not judge by outward fact, but by the inward frames of the heart, and dispositions of the soul. The blood of all the prophets, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zacharias, was to be required of that generation of the Jews in whose times Christ lived, though not a man of them had ever known Abel or Zacharias but by the history of the Scripture, Mat. xxiii. 35, Luke xi. 51; yet Christ tells them they had shed the blood of Abel, and all the rest to Zacharias. Neither did they formally approve of those actions; no doubt but they would in words have testified an abhorrency of Cain, as well as many among us will their indignation against the traitor Judas, and would have disowned the wicked and cruel facts of their ancestors, who had dyed their hands over and over again in the blood of the prophets and messengers of God; yet they were still guilty of all that blood, because they had the same disposition of heart, by their unbelief, to do the same act as Cain did, who was the head of the unbelieving world; and they did imitate Cain in his hatred of his brother, by hating Christ, who was to be the grand sacrifice typified by the sacrifice Abel offered, and by Abel's blood too; and, having such a frame, would have used the same person with as much rigour, were he then alive, as Cain did. So no doubt but there is the same disposition in every unbeliever to use Christ as cruelly, were he now alive upon the earth in the same state as he then was, and should fall foul upon the reigning sins of men's hearts, as the Jews did then use him; for the reason is the same. If those Jews, notwithstanding all their glaving affection to the prophets that had been slain by their ancestors, would have handled them as sharply, and persecuted them to the death, had they been alive in their time, and had as faithfully performed their office and message as they did then, no doubt but men having the same disposition would do as much to Christ; and, having the same root in them, and bringing forth the same fruit, where it is in their power, they would do the same to Christ or any other object, if it were as obvious to them as that which is the mark of their fury. As those Jews had the spirit of their murdering fathers in them, though themselves did not believe it, so every unbeliever hath the spirit of the crucifying Jews in him, though they themselves think no such thing, and

* Nerimberg. de Adorat. lib. i. cap. vii. p. 48, &c.

would with as much abhorrency detest such a fact as the Jews did that of their fathers. There is still the same rancorous root of bitterness latent in the heart and nature, as was in theirs.

(2.) It hath the same object now, the person of Christ, though in another manner. Whatsoever is done against the commands, and doctrine, and people of Christ, against his inward motions in the soul, is done against the person of Christ: Acts ix. 4, 'Why persecutest thou me?' How could the persecution of believers by Saul be more against the person of Christ than unbelief, the root from whence that furious zeal did branch? As the Father appeared principally in the creation of the world, forming the design of it, and upon that occasion settled the law as a rule of man's obedience, every sin against the law is an offence against him, a blasphemy of the Father. But redemption being the work of the Son, by his suffering and resurrection, and the Son being the matter and subject of the doctrine of the gospel, and set forth as an object of faith, and appointed by the Father the lawgiver of the world, the gospel refers properly to the person of Christ; and unbelief is a sin committed against the person of the Son, and an outraging him. Apostasy and denying Christ to be the Messiah is by the apostle called a crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh: Heb. vi. 6, 'They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.' It is such an act as is by interpretation a crucifying the person of the Son of God; it is a rejecting his person and offices, and counting him a deceiver, as the Jews did, Mat. xxvii. 63, and not the Son of God; for if we do count of him as one sent from God, why do we not believe in him? why do we run from him? *ἑαυτοῖς, to themselves, or in, or with themselves*, as much as in them lies. All his common works, which were upon their hearts, they kill, which is as much as a killing his person; what they do to his truth, and the convictions they have, they would do to his person were he in their power. They put him to an open shame, for as he was derided and reproached as an impostor when he was upon the cross, so men by their unbelief shame him before the eyes of men. The action in refusing him and departing from him asserts that there are no allurements in him, nothing worthy of love, but worthy of that reproachful usage he had among his crucifiers. As apostasy is attended with this guilt in the account of the apostle, so is all unbelief, according to the degrees of it, more or less, because it is a virtual denial of Christ's being what really he is, the Son of God, and Saviour of the world; which was that the Jews denied, and therefore crucified him, and therefore is a sin against the person of Christ as well as theirs. As faith pitcheth upon the person of Christ as its proper object, so the refusal of the person of Christ is that which doth constitute this sin of unbelief.

(3.) It hath the same end, the indulgence of some carnal lust and end. Is not our love naturally as strong to those corruptions which lie nuzzling in our natures? Are we not as fond of them, as indulgent to them, as the scribes and pharisees were to theirs? They did not pay a greater homage to their beloved sin, and adore their heart-idols with a greater veneration, than every one of us endeavour to pleasure ours naturally; and this is the main end of every unrenewed unbelieving person. Therefore, if Christ were among us in the same garb as he was among the Jews, and shewed his dislike of our vices and corruptions, and laid the axe to the root of them, though edged with so many miracles as he did among them, what reason have we to think that he should not meet with the same rude entertainment among us as he did among them? Our nature is no better than theirs, our lusts as dear to us as theirs, principles of education as strong in us as theirs; we

have the same spiritual progenitor by nature as they had, even the devil, and his lusts we do as well as they : John viii. 44, Eph. ii. 2, 3, 'The spirit that works in the children of disobedience (*ἀπειθείας*, unpersuadableness), among whom also we had our conversation in times past, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind,' and are as much guided by his inspirations as they ; for the apostle pronounceth it of all, of himself and the Gentiles, as well as Christ had before of the Jews. Would we not befriend our father, especially when he would put forth his utmost power and malice in us upon such an occasion, as he did at that time in them ? And we rather should use him more spitefully, because if he did come in the flesh, it would be contrary to expectations, whereas they expected the Messiah, and gloried in the promise of his coming. Had any told them before, that they should have used him so barbarously as they did, they would have thought themselves wronged and defamed. What ! to crucify him whose coming they longed for, and had expected in their successive generations, from the time of Adam's being cast out of paradise ! Yet for all this, you know how they used him, because he came in another garb than they expected. They looked for him to come as a conqueror, and he came as a person not knowing where to lay his head. And what unbeliever is there among us that can assure himself he would not do the like, were Christ in person present, and struck as cross a blow at his darling corruptions as he did at those of the Jews in that time ? What pharisees would not swell against him, if he should tell them of loading men with grievous burdens, and charge them with their hypocrisy and formal devotions, and thunderingly tell them they should die in their sins ? Is there not the same reason ? Have not men the same love to their vices as they had then ? What can alter their affections ? Nothing but faith. While men, therefore, remaining in unbelief, have the same dispositions, the same ends, and the same motives to unbelief as they had, they would do the same acts against Christ, out of the same disposition, and for the same ends, which managed them in all that tragedy. They would still fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Those that sacrifice the truths, precepts, ordinances of Christ to their Delilahs, would sacrifice Christ himself, whose truths, precepts, and ordinances they are. If Christ were again upon the earth in the same state, he would be as faithful to his Father's instructions as he was then ; and unbelievers would be as faithful to their father's, the devil's, instructions, as the Jews were then.

As we see in what sense unbelief now is as bad as the Jews' crucifying, as having the same disposition, being set against the same object and guided by the same ends and motives, so we shall see that

2. Unbelief now is worse than the unbelief of the Jews, and worse than that act of crucifying Christ, and more grievous to him. They crucified him by the authority of Pilate, and pretended a law among them whereby he ought to die. But what pretence can there be for any man's unbelief among us ? Our unbelief at the last day will be an excuse of theirs.* The Jews resisted a truth offered to them, but we resist the force and power of that truth which in the notion we own. While we receive it in our assent, we reject it in our consent ; we profess him to be the Son of God and Saviour of the world in our doctrine, and proclaim it a mere imposture in our practice. Theirs was a rejecting him ; ours a scorn and mocking of him. Besides, we by our baptism are obliged votaries to him ; we have given up our names to Christ in an outward profession, and promised faith in him and obedience to him. The Jews did not formally so, though implicitly they did, as the doctrine of it was contained in the ceremonies of the law of

* Zanch. in Decalog. cap. xii. de ἀπιστία, Thes. viii. p. 246.

Moses and the writings of the prophets. But our unbelief is manifested after solemn promises to stick to him.

(1.) Our unbelief is against the spiritual discovery of Christ; theirs was not. Their sin was against his personal discovery, ours against his spiritual, in the miraculous appearance of the Spirit in the apostles' preaching. The coming of the Spirit depended upon Christ's glorification, John vii. 39; their sin therefore could not be so great as ours, it being against a less, and ours against a greater, discovery of Christ by the effusion of the Holy Ghost. It is a contempt of Christ after a full revelation. The Jews had better excuses to plead for the mitigation of their crime, the prophecies concerning the Messiah were obscure till cleared by the event, and delivered in such expressions that a natural understanding might conceive them to be meant of an outward splendour rather than a spiritual glory. The condition of Christ was so mean and disguised in the world, that they could scarce discern the Lord of glory for the mask of infirm flesh, could not tell how to imagine him to be the Son of God, who was meaner than an ordinary man in his outward appearance. There were, indeed, some sparks of his divinity flashed out in his words and actions, but short of those illustrious beams wherewith he afterwards chased away the darkness of the world, short of that power whereby afterwards he broke open the gates of hell, and hurled Satan, the prince of it, from his long-possessed throne. They crucified him, whenas yet the Spirit had not spread the light abroad, discovered the reason of all the foregoing methods, had not yet shewed him to be the Lord of glory, nor animated some men to preach him in the world and bear witness to the truth of his mission against their worldly interest, and whatsoever was dear unto them there. Not a nation in the world had then submitted their sceptre to the Son of God; the world as yet lay steeped in idolatry, and wallowed in the sink of hell. But our unbelief being after the clearest discovery of him, and his appearance in the power of his royalty, since he hath a long time reigned in the midst of his enemies, is rendered more vile, unreasonable, and inexcusable. The Spirit doth not speak of Christ to come in an obscure style, as the prophets did, but manifests things past, things accomplished, in unveiled and clear expressions, and with an undeniable light. He discovers not Christ on earth in a mean flesh and form of a servant, but in the glory of the Son of God, and as a mediator for man, invested with the government of the world, and hath sealed the truth of his mission with the conversion of many nations, and spread it over all parts of the world, contrary to human methods, whereby false religions and errors have been propagated in the earth. The promise of the Spirit's mission, made by our Saviour on earth, being performed, is an evidence of the acceptance Christ finds with the Father, and of the stability of all his declarations as a foundation of faith. It is against this appearance of his our present unbelief is, which makes it more criminal than that of the Jews in crucifying him when he was under a veil. We have seen the conquest he hath made by his Spirit for so many ages since his being upon the earth; how prodigious, then, is our heart-refusal of him after so many records of his power, and troops of miracles wrought by the strength of his name!

(2.) They crucified him when he was in a state of humiliation; our unbelief is against him, since he is exalted at the right hand of his Father. There is a great deal of difference between the contempt of one upon a dunghill and upon a throne. They sinned not against a Christ crucified for them; he had not then died for them when they apprehended him and sought his death. Theirs was against God's act in sending Christ; ours

against God's act in sending him, and glorifying him also. Theirs was against Christ in his low estate; ours against Christ in his exalted nature. Theirs against Christ as a man on earth; ours against him as the Son of God in heaven, and in his approaches to the fulness of his kingly authority in judging the world. They crucified his humanity, and we, in a manner, his divinity. They believed not in him when he was clouded in the form of a servant; we believe not in him when he hath reassumed the glory of the Deity. He was as a contemptible shrub among them, making no appearance of rising into a full-grown tree; there was not that manifest grandeur wherein he seemed to be promised: he appeared not in such a garb as to seem desirable to them: Isa. liii. 2, 'He was as a root out of a dry ground.' But we have heard of him in his glory mounting above the violences of men, dropping off the infirmities of the flesh, shaking off the fetters of death by a victorious resurrection, and triumphant ascending above the heavens to live for ever, and all this that he might be believed on, confided in as the Redeemer of the world. Judge, then, which unbelief is more sinful. They crucified him whom they supposed to be a man and a malefactor; we crucify him who was glorified after he was crucified for us. We crucify him since his divinity hath been manifested above his humanity; they when his humanity had veiled his divinity. Which of the Jews, that should have seen Christ at the right hand of God, as Stephen did, would have dared to utter those words, 'Crucify him, crucify him!'^{*} Every unbeliever, that dares not speak it, dares do it. They will be confounded, when they see him glorious whom they have pierced. Many of them bewailed their crime when they believed his resurrection; we reproach him while we pretend to believe him glorious, and crucify him again by rejecting his promises and precepts, whom we confess to be risen from the grave. Had the Jews had the Messiah only promised them by the prophets,† and had not believed it, it had not been so great a sin as not to believe him after he came, and prefer Cæsar, an earthly king, before him, and the life of Barabbas, a murderer, before his. It was an higher sin to refuse him, not only since he was promised, but was come, and had preached and wrought miracles among them, and had lived holily; yet it was a greater sin than of crucifying him, not to believe on him after he was dead, raised again, ascended into heaven, had sent the Holy Ghost and converted a world. Peter denied Christ, Judas betrayed him, Pilate condemned him, the Jews crucified him, but not one of them had then seen him dead, raised, and ascended into heaven, and sending the Holy Ghost, as we have full evidences of. As if the Jews did not believe Moses, when he pretended in Egypt to deliver them, by taking the Israelite's part, and killing the Egyptian, it was no such great thing. But after he had been, as it were, dead by his absence, and returned again, by a course of miracles, knocked off their chains, brought them through the Red Sea, for them then to carry themselves so to him, as if he had not delivered them, was a great injury to God and him. So it is a greater injury, since Christ, by his death, hath freed us from evil, brought the kingdom of heaven, his gospel, among us, and that for many years, that we should not heartily comply with his terms, but behave ourselves towards him as if he were a mere man, an unworthy man, had done nothing for us, had not been taken notice of by God, but in a way of punishment. So to carry ourselves after his high exaltation, is unparalleled, even among devils, and by the sin of the Jews in crucifying him. And our notional owning him, or assenting to the articles of the creed concerning his death, resurrection, ascension, and sitting at the right hand

* Nerimberg de Adorat. lib. i. cap. v. p. 48, &c.

† Ochino Prædic. part v. Prædic. xxviii. pp. 209, 210.

of God, and his coming to judge the quick and the dead, is so far from alleviating the crime, that it renders it more base and unworthy, not to cast ourselves upon him for salvation, resign up ourselves to be saved in his way, and guided by his precepts, after our acknowledgments of his death and exaltation. I say, it renders it more unworthy than the Jews' murder, or the present unbelief of their posterity, because it is a contradiction to our own professed sentiments.

(3.) Our unbelief is more palpably against the offices of Christ than theirs was: it was not of that black hue then. Christ had not a full investiture in his offices, he had not all royal power settled upon him, till after his sacrificing himself. For the full exercise of those offices belonged to his state of exaltation, and he was not perfected till he was offered up, Heb. v. 9; it is now against his priestly office settled upon him for ever, and against a special part of it, his intercession. They sinned against Christ ready to offer up himself a sacrifice; we against Christ who hath offered himself a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour to God; we sin against him as an advocate settled at the right hand of God. It is true, Christ did intercede before his coming in the flesh, and evidences of it there are in Scripture, but that was not evident to the Jews. It was then upon the account of what he was by compact to suffer, it is now upon the account of what, according to that compact, he hath suffered; it is a sin, therefore, more peculiarly against his priestly office, in his pleading for all the fruits of his oblation, and appearing in the presence of God for us, as well as appearing for God to us; theirs was against the latter, and ours against both; theirs was against Christ, when as yet the contract was to be performed; ours against him, when, according to the contract, the price and ransom is paid; theirs was when the debt due to God remained unsatisfied; ours when God hath given Christ an acquittance for the payment of it, and made him king, priest, prophet, prince, and saviour, and for ever invested him in each particular office. It was not by any force, but with the greatest willingness, that he offered up himself 'to destroy the works of the devil,' 1 John iii. 8, and to be, in all respects, an officer of mercy at the right hand of his Father. If we shall endeavour to preserve him, whom Christ came to cast out by his death; if we preserve any of those works by unbelief, Christ came to destroy; if we continue the sceptre of Satan in his hands by our want of faith; nay, if we preserve that unbelief, which was the first work that the devil framed in our first parents by his subtlety, we do that which hinders the glory of his offices, and that which is more contrary to his honour than the death the Jews inflicted on him.* His death did not discontent him, he was highly willing to bow down his head under it, it was the way to the glory of all his offices; he was to pass through the cross to the throne, and be first a sacrifice before he could be an advocate, and yield up the Ghost before he could send the Spirit. Unbelief, then, which would deprive him of the glory of all this, is more injurious than those Jews were which nailed him to the cross, and more grievous than the ignominious death he suffered.

(4.) Our unbelief is against Christ after he hath finished his work, their act was against him when he was moving towards the performance of it. He had not then manifested the grandeur of his affection; he had, indeed, taken human nature, and humbled himself to the infirm condition of our flesh; but his death, which was the commendation of his love, and the discovery of his affection in redemption, was not then suffered; their sin could not be against this, because it was not yet manifested; they made way by their sin for a discovery of that love we sin against. They sinned against Christ as

* Jackson, vol. iii. fol. p. 343, changed.

he was preparing himself to be a sacrifice for them, and sanctifying himself to be an atoning offering; we sin against him as already consecrated by his own blood, and consecrating for us 'by his own flesh a living way,' Heb. x. 20. In the crucifying of him they sinned against Christ as the Son of God, but not against Christ as a sacrifice; they rather contributed, though not intentionally, to this oblation of himself. But we sin against the only sacrifice for sin, which hath been offered for us, so that there is a greater ingratitude and contempt in our sin than theirs; neither the priests nor people, Pilate nor Judas, had seen Christ dead for them, before their own act in crucifying him. Judas betrayed him, the people voted him, and Pilate condemned him to death; but an unbeliever betrays, votes, condemns the death of Christ to death; he betrays the ends of it, condemns that to a nullity which God accepted as a price, and votes against those offices which were founded upon his death, and which he could not have exercised if he had not died, and thereby virtually pulls him from his throne, unto which he was to pass by the cross: for 'ought not Christ first to suffer, and so to enter into his glory?' Luke xxiv. 26.

(5.) Our unbelief is against a more signal manifestation of God's attributes in their highest perfection. God hath not opened the treasures of his wisdom to man till the sufferings of Christ were over, nor was his love manifested in the highest manner till our Saviour bled, nor his justice discovered till the stroke was given, nor did his power triumph but in the resurrection of our Saviour. The glory of those attributes lay hid and wrapped up in him, till Christ came down from the cross, and rose from the grave. We sin against that goodness which pitied us more than it seemed to pity his own Son. We sin against that justice that sheathed a sword in his bowels to spare our souls. We sin against that blood that sealed our pardon, against that truth which had brought the promises upon record for so many ages to an happy accomplishment, and made them *yea and amen*, fully irreversible, by our Saviour's blood; against a wisdom that astonished angels more than that in the whole creation, and against an almighty strength that never bared its arm so much as in raising our surety laden with our guilt. Since nothing of those appeared so eminent but in and after the crucifixion of Christ, their sin could not so sully the honour of those which did not then appear. They were ignorant instruments in the hands of God to promote rather than violate the honour of those attributes. But doth not our unbelief endeavour to take off the wheels of their triumphant chariot, and lay the honour of them in the dust? The Jews, indeed, after the death of Christ, sinned against all these in their brightness as well as any of us; but not in the very act of crucifixion, because by the death of the Son of God these excellencies were brought in all their glories to our view, which had else lain invisible in the secret place of the Most High, and never should have shewn their faces to the sons of men. Without it, neither men nor angels could have had any prospect of them. And though we imitate not the Jews in the act of crucifixion, it is not for want of natural disposition, but for want of opportunity. Christ is not here in person to be crucified by us, but we tread in the steps of the Jewish unbelief, which was more gross after the passion of Christ than before; and we crucify the glory of those attributes of God, which received their life from the blood of the Redeemer.

(6.) Our unbelief is aggravated from the accomplishment of the promises and threatenings for unbelief, which their sin was not against. We have greater assurances since Christ's ascension of the performance of promises than they had before. The gospel hath, according to the prediction of Christ, from a grain of mustard-seed, risen up to a mighty tree. It hath been by

various providences carried into remote corners, spread further than the Roman eagles. It hath been made known in the then unknown parts of America. It hath visited all nations, Mat. xxiv. 14, and a great harvest hath sprung up in all ages since, from the seed of our Saviour's body cast into the ground, according to his prophecy, John xii. 24. We have known the Jews sinking under the truth of his threatening, and the destruction of Jerusalem, the fatal place of his suffering. We see them to this day stripped of the badges of God's ancient favours, without a king or prince, without a sacrifice, without image, ephod, or teraphim.* We see the scars of God's just anger upon them for above 1600 years, not yet seeking the Lord their God, and David their king, Hosea iii. 4, 5. And besides, we have known churches degenerate in their faith, and (as the fruit of it) laid in the dust; the tabernacle of God removed from them; their lands desolated, and their posterity laid in thick darkness. How have we known him in the glory of his mercy and truth, and the rigours of his justice! Have we not seen him with his iron rod crushing his beloved people, and alluring with his golden sceptre nations alienated from the life of God, and strangers to the covenant of promise? There hath not failed one word of all his good promise which he promised by the hand of Moses, the prophets, and his own Son, 1 Kings viii. 56; no, nor one word of all those sad threatenings which were thundered out against that unbelieving nation, who lie yet under that wretched distemper of slighting the Son of David, the promised seed, and under the fearful curse of God's oath, that they 'shall not enter into his rest,' Heb. iii. 18, 19. And is our unbelief, that spurns at all those evidences of his truth or faithfulness, and his wrath against incredulity, less criminal than theirs was? They sinned against the word of his promise and threatening, and we against the work and performance of both. They believed not, when no nation had been cast off, nor could be cast off, for that sin. But we believe not, when we know that for this sin God hath taken away the birthright from the Jew. Our sin is therefore against the mercies which believers upon record have had for their faith, and against the judgments God hath poured out on the Jews and others for their unbelief. How grievous is it to commit that sin, for which persons bear the tokens of God's wrath before our eyes! And never palliate the business by pleading that none of us are as the Jews, because we profess Christ to be the Messiah, and own him to be the Son of God, and the Redeemer of the world; our unbelief is worse than theirs, because we orally own him, and cordially deny him. It is the same with theirs in the inward disposition, though not in the outward profession.

(7.) Our unbelief is against greater knowledge than theirs was.

[1.] The act itself. They put him to death through ignorance, whom, if they had known in the excellency of his person, they would not have crucified, 1. Cor. ii. 8. Peter bears the same witness, Acts iii. 17, 'I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers; † and Christ himself in his dying prayer bore witness to this: Luke xxiii. 34, 'They know not what they do.' They crucified him when his divinity was under a veil, and therefore there are milder expressions of their crucifying Christ than there can be of ours. Would the apostles speak truth were they living, and should utter the same expressions of our infidelity, 'Had they known him, they would not have slighted him'? or can Christ put up the same prayer now for those that contemn him under all the glorious marks of his deity? can he say, 'Father, they know me not, have not had any revelations of me to be the Son of God'? Without question, no. It must be thus, Father, they have seen the trophies

* Jackson, vol i. fol. p. 132.

† The rabbins call their wise men *עולם רבי* *magnates seculi*.

of my death in the world, they have known the transcendent effects of my glorification, they have read, and read again, in the records of Scripture (which they confess they do not question) the conquests I have made, the multitude of disciples I have gained, and the treading devils under my feet; yet remain worse devils than those I have subdued. We do believe his ascension and session at the right hand of God, and answer not the ends of them. We refuse Christ against knowledge, which they did through ignorance. It was a mitigation of Paul's sin that he persecuted 'ignorantly in unbelief,' 1 Tim. i. 13; he did not believe Christ to be that person that really he was. Theirs, as well as his, was an ignorant unbelief, ours a knowing one; theirs was a crucifying Christ ignorantly in unbelief, ours a rejecting Christ knowingly in faith; *i. e.* we consent not to that unto which we profess our assent. They thought him to be mere man and a criminal, and did not assent to the dignity of his person; we acknowledge him to be God and Redeemer, and we consent not to the reasonableness of his terms. The guilt is greater when it is against clear manifestations, gracious offers, sweet wooings, multiplied essays of love and power, than when against some few tastes; and to heighten it, a guilt under a self-condemnation.

[2.] The examples of converts more. The examples of converts in the time of Christ were produced as living witnesses against the Jews in that time: Mat. xxi. 32, 'Publicans and harlots believed John, and you, when you had seen it, believed not;' and no doubt they will be brought as testimonies at the last day. Was it so high an aggravation then, and is it less now, against those who have had not only those testimonies upon record, but many other testimonies of faith in the ages since and their own age; yea, the turning the scales of the whole world, and the glorious conquests of Christ by ways different from the methods of men? The unbelief after the sight of Christ's converting power upon any heart is a charge as great, if not greater, than the refusing to believe upon a single declaration of the doctrine, because every conversion in our sight is an evidence of the power of Christ, and the end of his coming and suffering. Such works are his standing miracles now, which bear witness of him. The evidences whereby Christ chargeth the Jews' unbelief with a greater guilt come short of those which we have had: John x. 25, 'The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.' It is in this respect against greater miracles than Christ performed among them; for greater works were done by the apostles than by Christ, John xiv. 12, which must be meant of the conversion of men, and the great success they had in that work, more than Christ while he was upon the earth in his person. The Jews had great means, the power of his miracles, the sweetness of his conversation, to assist against their infidelity, yet they vilified his person, misinterpreted his doctrine, ascribed the sparks of his divinity to the powers of hell and the strength of Beelzebub, and at length exposed him to the cross. Is not our unbelief a virtual approbation of all that they did against those hints and means which might have persuaded them to another kind of carriage? But ours hath something to make it more base and unreasonable, it being against the power of his doctrine in converting a world, and supporting myriads of martyrs in bearing their testimony to his truth under the flames and severest punishments. The conversions in the days of his flesh were some few sprinklings within the compass of Judea and Samaria; the evidences we have had have been whole shoals upon the surface of the earth. The miracles he wrought were unanswerable testimonies of his mission, but altogether not so great as that of his resurrection, which was a miracle after they had put him to death. It is this we sin against, which they did not in the crucifixion of him.

[3.] Theirs was against a shorter time of instruction than ours. It was but between three and four years; about three years and a half Christ taught among them. It is ten, twenty, or more years Christ hath been pulling at our hearts, and proposing the terms of the gospel. We sin against the instruction they had, for we have them transmitted to us by faithful witnesses; against the teachings of the apostles, which were comments upon the gospel; against multitudes of sermons sounding in our ears. What is the crucifying Christ after three years' hearing of his words and seeing his miracles, to twenty or thirty years' vilifying his person, and disparaging his office, and treading under foot the Son of God?

[4.] Suppose they had known what they did, yet their crucifying of him was but one act. But since every act of unbelief, and every single refusal of his gracious terms, is a crucifying the Son of God afresh, is the guilt of multiplied acts put together less than one single one, especially when every act hath a knowledge to aggravate it?

(8.) They in crucifying Christ did what God had determined, what Christ was willing to, but it is not so in our unbelief. I do not intend this to lessen their sin (for they had no respect to the decree of God in the execution of Christ) but it aggravates ours. God is said to deliver up Christ (Acts ii. 23, 'Him being delivered by the determinate counsel of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain') not only as an act of his prescience, but his counsel, and that determinate, *i. e.* stable and irreversible. He makes a distinction between these two acts; in God it was an act of counsel, in them an act of wickedness, 'by wicked hands.' There was a previous act of counsel, and after that an actual tradition: Rom. viii. 32, 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.' God decreed the sufferings of Christ, but he never positively decreed any man's unbelief, though he decreed to permit it.

[1.] It was necessary. It is not imaginable that the death of Christ could be brought about but in some such way as it was, by the wickedness of man, to answer all the gracious purposes of God. There was a necessity of it to the satisfaction of his justice, in regard of the sanction of the law, and the inability of any or all mere creatures to restore the damaged honour of the law. He could not in his own person deserve death; for could it be supposed that our Saviour should be guilty of any capital crime, whereby, according to the righteousness of the Jewish laws, he had forfeited his life, the whole frame of redemption had cracked asunder, the person wanting that innocence in himself which was necessary to make satisfaction for others? Had God put him to death by some remarkable stroke from heaven, without the intervention of man, the voluntariness of Christ, which was necessary to the perfection of his oblation, had not been evident, his innocence would not have been assured to us. The remarkable stroke would have presented him to man under the notion of a notorious sinner, that heaven could patiently bear no longer. The gospel could not have been propagated. Who would have entertained that person as a Saviour, whose innocence could not be cleared? None who, according to the common sentiments of men, appeared as a malefactor, would have been embraced as a Redeemer. If it be said, God might have raised him again after such a stroke, and his resurrection would have made him entertainable as one beloved of God, but what evidences could there have been that it was a resurrection, or that he had been really dead? But in this way of God's procedure, the innocence of Christ, his freeness to suffer, the reality of his death and resurrection, are undeniably assured to us. There was therefore a necessity of the death of Christ, and in some such way as that whereby it was executed, both in regard of

the counsel of God, and the fulfilling of the predictions which had foretold the circumstances. But our unbelief is in no manner necessary, either *necessitate pacti*, by necessity of contract, as that was, or *necessitate medii*, of means, as that was to the salvation of men. For this sin is point blank against any covenant of God, and renders damnation certain, and salvation impossible. The death of Christ was necessary for the satisfaction of God's justice, though it was not formally necessary that those very persons should crucify him. The sufferings of Christ were necessary to his glory; his heel was to be bruised by the devil, as well as the devil's head by him. But unbelief is not a due to him as a means for the glory of his person; he was to suffer, for 'ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?' But *ought* cannot be set on unbelief. It cannot be said, *Ought* not Christ to have been rejected, contemned, and so to have entered into his glory? His death was necessary in order thereunto, but not our unbelief.

[2.] Besides, there was an 'obedience unto death' enjoined to Christ,* and his will complied with it, both his divine and human will; his will as he was the Son of God, and his will as he was the Son of David. But his will neither as he is the Son of God, nor as he is the Son of man, is for unbelief. Since he was to be obedient to death, the suffering the death then inflicted on him was a part of his obedience; but the suffering a new crucifixion and disparagement by infidelity, since he went to glory, is no part of the obedience owing by Christ to his Father. We do that in not believing which doth more displease him, and is more against the interest of his glory, than they did in putting him to death, to which his will, with the greatest freeness, and the impulse of a divine law in his heart, persuaded him, and which indeed was the chief end of his coming.

[3.] If we may judge of sin by the consequences of it, our sin is far greater than theirs. The salvation of man, the glory of God's love, justice, wisdom; the glory of Christ's patience, tenderness, the mission of the Holy Ghost, the accomplishment of promises, prophecies, were the consequents of this; not simply fruits of the Jews' action, but of Christ's passion; not the consequents intentionally of their wickedness, but of God's grace. God extracted this glory to himself, and an immense good to man, from the malice of the devil and the Jews. Can any man's unbelief, since Christ hath suffered, be ever an occasion of so great a good? It cannot be imagined how the infinite power of God can make any man's unbelief instrumental to such glorious ends, unless he should send a Saviour to suffer the same tragedy over again in his own person. Nothing but the glory of God's justice, the manifestation of his truth in his wrathful threatenings, the satisfaction of the devil's malice, and the eternal misery of the immortal soul, can be the consequents of present infidelity. Their sin was a means ordered by God to do that, which procured the most inestimable blessings for us; but our sin is against all the blessings purchased by that death, and all the tokens of Christ's love bestowed upon the world at his ascension.

III. The third thing in the sinfulness of this sin was, besides the sinfulness as it respects God, and as it is as bad, and in some sense worse, than the sin of the Jews; so there are many other reasons which manifest the sinfulness of this sin of infidelity.

1. This sin of unbelief is much of the same nature with the first sin of the devils. It is probable by the Scripture that pride was the sin: 1 Tim. iii. 6, 'Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the

* Jackson, vol. iii. fol. p. 343, changed.

condemnation of the devil.' If we take it passively, lest he fall as the devil fell by his pride against God, there is indeed pride in every sin, but the formality of the devil's sin seems by this place to consist in pride, who being puffed up with his dignity in the creation, was hurled into a lake of fire. What was the occasion of his pride, or the particular formality of his pride, is not easily determinable.

There are four ways* of his sinning conjectured by men.

(1.) That seeing himself the highest of created beings, and most approaching in likeness to God, he affected an equality with God, Ezek. xxviii. 12, 13, &c. to 17, which, though literally it be spoken of Tyre, yet some understand it allusively of the chief angel; because he speaks of his being in Eden, the garden of God, an anointed cherub that covers, and was upon the holy mount of God, perfect in his ways, till iniquity was found in him. He set his heart as the heart of God, his heart was lifted up because of his beauty, and he corrupted his wisdom by reason of his brightness, wherein, say they, the sin of Tyre, as well as his excellency, is compared to the excellency of the devil in his creation, and his sin at his fall.

(2.) That the devil endeavoured to obtain a blessedness by his own strength, without dependence on grace. As if he had been sufficient to make himself happy by the strength of those natural perfections God had first endowed him with at his creation. He apprehended nothing else needful for him but the portion at first bestowed upon him, and trusted to obtain that by himself which he could only have by the grace of his Creator. He would be like God in being the fountain and principle of his own happiness, and equal himself to God in deserting any dependence upon God's sufficiency to rely upon his own.

(3.) Others say, that the devil affected a pre-eminence over every creature; and seeing the legions of angels created with him, and himself in the highest rank, he would be singular, subject to none, and ruler over all; choosing rather, saith Austin, to delight in the subjection of others to him, than in his subjection to God; affecting that royal dignity which was only due to the Son of God, and would not be a ministering spirit to the heirs of salvation, creatures of an inferior rank and baser alloy than himself, over whom he expected an absolute authority, when all the angels, without exemption of any, were designed to this office: Heb. i. 14, 'Are they not all ministering spirits?' as the elder children are ordered to take care of the younger in a family. He envied Christ the dignity of being set in the human nature 'above principalities and powers,' Eph. i. 19, 20. This hath a likelihood in it, since he sets himself chiefly against mankind, as having a particular enmity against them, whose dignity in the hypostatical union was envied by him, which was his sin, and the cause of his fall. Men always have the greatest animosity against them, upon whose account and occasion they suffer.

(4.) Others say, that the sin of the devil was a refusal to be subject to Christ, when the revelation was made to him and the other angels of his future incarnation: Heb. i. 6, 'And again, when he brings in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him,' *πάλιν εισαγάγη*. This particle *again* they join with *brings in*, and the Greek favours this, 'when he again brings in his first begotten into the world;' signifying that he had brought his Son into the world before as an object of worship, by a particular revelation made to the angels, and required the worship of him in a peculiar manner, not only as one with himself in the Deity, which they could not be supposed to refuse, but under another rela-

* De Lingendes, tom. ii. Concio lix. page 585.

tion, as the head of their confirmation, and the fountain from whence they were to derive their blessedness. God intended to 'gather in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even unto him,' Eph. i. 10; this being proposed to them was refused by Satan and his adherents, glorying in their own natural perfection, and conceiving they had strength enough of themselves, and needed no additional grace, and were loath to be subject to a nature inferior in natural perfections to their own, and worship an inferior nature to theirs in union with the Son of God. 'Let all the angels of God worship him,' is as much as to say, Let all the angels of God follow his direction, which, upon the account of their natural perfection, they refused to submit unto, because they were then to be subject to the human nature.

In all these ways unbelief has a resemblance to the devil's sin. It affects an equality with God in a self-dependence, rests in the sufficiency of its own righteousness, without bowing down the will to the acceptance of grace, delights not in subjection to God, refuseth Christ, the head and mediator of God's appointment. In all which pride is signal; and indeed pride of reason, and pride of will, are the two arms wherein the strength of unbelief lies.

This latter way, whereby the devil is said to sin, seems to be more probable. They are said to fall through pride; not a pride of aspiring to be equal with their Creator, for they, being created with the clearest intellects, and knowing themselves to be creatures under an almighty power, would not attempt that which they could not but know at the first appearance to be an utter impossibility. This would suppose an error in their understanding, which their perfect nature could not incline to. It is not, therefore, likely that their sin was to desire the Godhead, or to be partaker of the nature of God in an equality with him. Nothing in God or his nature could displease them, or be any occasion of their pride, and they had power over corporeal things; but there might happen something in the disposal of the lower things of the world which might not be so agreeable to them, and therein their desires might be averse from that which was the design of God; and so it is easy to conceive that a revelation of the incarnation of Christ being made to them, and the human nature being deputed in that union to rule over the angels, this might displease them; for among all objects whereby any occasion of aversion from God might arise in them, this is most likely. It was the most considerable thing to preside and rule over mankind, and God's disposing of it otherwise in subjecting them to that nature, which, because of the excellency of their own nature they expected to rule over, is the most probable ground of their aversion. It was pride, and pride immediately against God cannot so easily be supposed, as pride upon this occasion we have spoken of.

And that such a rejecting Christ might be their sin may have some reasons for it; however, they will evidence this sin to be a conformity to the devil,

(1.) Because of the constant and uninterrupted opposition he has always manifested to the Son of God. He hath always discovered more enmity to the nature and mediation of Christ, and the faith of men in him, than he hath against the nature of God. He never so much opposed the notion of one supreme God in the world; supremacy of one God was acknowledged by all the heathens; but he endeavoured to block up any way of their entertaining the true mediator, by filling them with notions of many mediators between God and mankind, in which rank all the deities they worshipped were accounted by them, and looked upon but as mediators between the one

supreme God and his creatures in the world. He hath always set himself in opposition to Christ, both among Jews and Gentiles, that he might not be believed to be the Messiah. Though he be against the whole Trinity, yet he seems to have a more particular spite against the second person, as if he had suffered more upon his account, for some crime against him, than against any other of the blessed persons in the Trinity. He raised up persecution against him from his coming into the world; he sets Herod against him when he was an infant; the rulers and rabble of the Jews, when he entered into his office; singles him out to shoot his greatest temptations against; acted Judas to betray him; raised storms against the apostles and his disciples in all parts of the world; broached errors against his deity, against his humanity, and corrupted his ordinances; so that Christ in his doctrine hath not been at quiet from this great enemy since he came first into the world. Upon which account Christ and Satan are set in direct opposition in Scripture; Christ is called the Son of man, as being the friend of man; the devil is called Satan, as being the adversary of man; he endeavours to destroy man, and Christ came to destroy the works of the devil; he is the accuser of man, and Christ the advocate of man. Upon the account of this opposition he is said more particularly to work in the first time of the gospel: Eph. ii. 2, 'Now works in the children of disobedience;' *now*, the gospel is come, and a crucified Saviour preached as the mediator between God and man, and the fountain of grace, he works with more strength and vigour than before. He had his empire formerly in the world; but now he works as if he had not wrought at all before; now he works in the children of disobedience (or ἀπειθείας, of unpersuadableness), to hinder them from the embracing Christ. The angels are the ministers of Christ in his mediatory kingdom; if the service of Christ be the office of angels, it is probable, the refusal to serve Christ in that office was partly the sin of devils.

(2.) Satan is the head of the unbelieving world, and men are said to be the children of the devil with a respect to this particular sin: John viii. 44, 'You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do: he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him.' And the first murder committed in the world, by the power of the devil in the heart of man, was in contempt of faith and the object of it, as viz., the murder of Abel by Cain, the head of the unbelieving world. They had been disputing against the doctrine of faith which Christ had preached to them, ver. 12 and ver. 24, and with respect to his discourse with them, and their unbelieving disputes against him, he tells them they were the devil's children, and they did his lusts. The lusts of the devil were suitable to the lusts the pharisees acted in this dispute; 'he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth;' he was a moral murderer of the angels that adhered to him, and were solicited by him to a revolt and mutiny; he brought them as well as himself into a spiritual death; he abode not in the truth, the truth which the pharisees now opposed, and which Christ had heard of God, ver. 40; and when they charged him that he had a devil, ver. 48, he renders a reason why he had not a devil, ver. 49, 50, because he sought not his own glory, intimating thereby that the devil's sin was a seeking his own glory; and certainly he may be well said to seek his own glory, that resolves to stand by his own natural righteousness. This place doth intimate to us, that the pharisees, in their opposition to Christ, sinned that sin which the devil sinned from the beginning, *i. e.* the beginning of his sin; and that sin must be a resemblance to this of the pharisees, which was an unwillingness to own Christ as

their head to stand by. And the whole mass of unbelievers are included in Satan as their head: Gen. xii. 3, 'I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee.' *Them*, in the plural number, *him* in the singular. *Him* respecting Satan, cursed in that first promise, as opposite to the seed of the woman in a peculiar manner; this *him* the Jews understand of Satan; he was the first unbeliever in the world, who draws a train after him, and propagates that interest of unbelief among the sons of men. He is the curser of all those who have any faith in Christ, and may well be counted the head of all unbelievers, as he was the first broacher of that sin of unbelief which is directly contrary to the blessing of Abraham. And in regard of this unbelief in Christ, Judas is called a devil: John vi. 70, 'I have chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil.' He hath the devil's nature and spirit in him in this sin.

(3.) The peculiar sense and reflection the devil hath upon himself at the appearance of Christ, seems to intimate this: Mat. viii. 29, 'They cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come to torment us before the time?' They intimate their great sin in a slighting of him, 'What have we to do with thee?' which is a speech of contempt and indignation, as 2 Sam. xvi. 10, 'What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah?' so Joshua xxii. 24, 'What have you to do with the Lord God of Israel?' They could not endure the sight of that person they had peculiarly refused, and for the refusal of whom they were involved in their misery. The expecting a signal torment at his hands upon his appearance, implies that their sin was more particularly against him; it flying in their face at that time, and filling them with a fresh expectation of indignation at the sight of the Judge, whom they had offended, by refusing his headship and direction.

Now, this sin of the devils, which seems to be this of refusing Christ as the foundation of their standing, and which was anciently generally supposed to be their crime, is not formally the same with our unbelief, but materially it is. They rejected not Christ as redeemer, because they stood in no need of redemption, having not then sinned, but rejected Christ as confirmer, choosing rather to stand upon their own bottom and righteousness than have any assistance from confirmation by grace in the method of God's proposing.

So that unbelief,

(1.) Is first an imitation of the devil's sin. It is a particular invasion of the rights of God as a governor and benefactor, who hath power in both regards to appoint his own ways and methods of doing his creatures good, and directing them how they should serve him, and be preserved or saved by him; so it is an imitation of the devil, who would not be subject to God's direction, but either not serve him, or else serve him according to his own understanding. We are like him in this, when we would save ourselves according to our own methods. If the sin of the devils were a priding themselves in their own created excellency, as their chief good and ultimate end, depending upon those admirable perfections of their nature by creation, and refusing the grace offered to them for their continuance in their created happiness, then unbelief is still the same with the sin of devils, because the root of it is a seeking our own glory, a glorying in our own natural or moral perfections, or sinful affections, and thereupon refusing to come under the rule of God, and submit to his grace discovered in Christ. The building ourselves and hopes upon our own righteousness, is equivalent to that of the devils, resting upon their own natural perfection in a way of independence upon God. But howsoever, since the first sin the devil discovered upon

the earth after his fall was a questioning the truth of God, which he particularly contradicted in his discourse with Eve, fastening a lie upon God,—Gen. iii. 4, ‘You shall not die,’—our unbelief is a resemblance to him in this, which though it slights all God’s attributes, yet strikes sorest at his truth, both in his promises, precepts, and threatenings.

(2.) It is an obedience to Satan. The devil rules in every unbelieving person. His lust we do in this sin, John viii. 44. And this sin is his stronghold whereby he governs men according to his pleasure. It is faith he chiefly assaults in the believer. The truth of God’s commands he disputed with Eve, and the truth of the gospel promises he disputes with every true Christian. He put it into the heart of Judas to betray Christ, and he obeyed him; he puts it into the heart of every unbeliever to contemn Christ, and he submits to him. Every sin indeed is an obedience to the devil; but since the height of his malice is to cast dirt upon God’s glory in the work of redemption, infidelity is a compliance with him in his principal design. He aimed at nothing more in his first temptation of man than to draw him into an ill opinion of God, and designs nothing more than to keep him in it.

All his endeavours were to hinder the redemption of man by the Son of God. Since he hath failed in that, his skill and pains are employed to stop the application of it, and stave men off from the acceptance. To that purpose he solicits men to continue under his banners with hopes of better pay than under the standard and yoke of Christ. Every unbeliever implicitly swears an allegiance to him; there are but two heads, disobedience to one is obedience to the other; he that is not with Christ is against him; he that comes not under his government is a sworn vassal of the devils.

(3.) It is like the sin of devils in the manner of their sinning. They sinned in a state of entire felicity, we sin in a capability of the highest happiness in regard of divine offers. They ‘forsook their own habitation’ with God, Jude 6, and we contemn a return to the fruition of God, after many experiences of the miseries of our fall, and the gracious indulgence of our offended Creator. And by how much the more unmerited the grace is, and the less claim can be pretended to it, by so much the more contemptuous is the violation and refusal of it.

(4.) It is a sin greater than that of devils. They refused the headship of Christ over them, when they had no experience in themselves or others of the miseries attending their refusal, till their lost happiness was past recovery; we refuse it, when we know in some sort what devils suffer, and unbelievers will suffer for their contempt. How may the devils plead, Lord, we sinned but against one covenant, we never were under a covenant of grace, we were offered to come under the head of thy appointment, but our pride ruined us. Howsoever, this head never assumed our nature, nor was punished in our stead; we were left to the doleful sound of our own chains, while those had liberty again and again proclaimed to them; thou didst stand ready to strike off their fetters and fasten ours. Had we had the mercies offered to us which those wretches have despised, and had we had hopes after some ages to be delivered from our punishments, we should have lived joyful in our future hopes, though in present misery. Our sins were not at such a rate as the sins of those guilty unbelieving souls. We did indeed refuse the covert of the wings of the Son of God. But we never refused a Christ bearing our sins in our nature, for none was offered to us, after the experience of the misery of our first contempt. Can any such plea be made by an unbeliever under the sound of the gospel?

The devils never sinned against God, that was made an angel for them;

nor ever experimented so great a goodness;* they never sinned against a God that conversed with them thirty years in the midst of sorrow and misery, repeating instructions to repentance, and encouraging them with hopes of pardon; but our unbelief is against a God who hath multiplied his goodness, lamented our sins in the garden, and bore the guilt of them upon the cross. The contempt of such astonishing goodness renders our unworthy carriage towards him more inexcusable than that of devils.

2. It is of the same nature with the first sin of Adam and Eve, which so highly provoked the anger of God, and brought such a deluge of miseries upon mankind; and in some regard it is greater than theirs.

(1.) It was the first sin of Adam. Not that it appears that Adam had the same formal object of faith as we have, viz., Christ a mediator; since there appears no discovery of Christ till after the fall, in the promise of the seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head. Some, indeed, say that Christ was typified by the tree of life in paradise, because he is called in Scripture 'the true vine,' 'the bread of life;' and by 'the tree of life,' Rev. ii. 7 and xxii. 14, they understand Christ the foundation of all happiness of man in innocency. This seems to have no foundation in the history of Adam's creation and fall, yet I know not what may be in it upon the supposition of many, and most of the schoolmen, that the devil's sin was, as hath been spoken before, a pride against Christ as their head; and perhaps, had Adam waited, Christ had been revealed as head of his standing. But this is clear, that Adam endeavoured to stand upon his own bottom, to be a rule of righteousness, and of the knowledge of good and evil to himself, and was not content to wait upon God in the way of his precept for a further revelation from him of his mind and will. To wait upon God in the revelations he hath made, and believe his veracity in his promises and threatenings, is one part of faith; not to depend upon him, but choose a dependence on ourselves, to turn our backs upon his revealed will, to be our own carvers, is unbelief, which Adam was highly guilty of. The first poison which was diffused by the breath of the serpent, brought forth this cursed monster: Gen. iii. 1, 'Yea, hath God said, you shall not eat of every tree of the garden?' exciting Eve to a diffidence of the mind of God, that he had not so contracted a goodness, and so little love to his creature, as to deny him the enjoyment of that fruit which seemed so good for food, and pleasant to the eyes above any tree of the garden; that since God had created paradise for man, and put him in possession of it, man surely mistook the speech of God to him, and was a wrong interpreter of God's intentions. Afterwards, the serpent descending from a question, ver. 1, 'Hath God said?' to a plain assertion, ver. 4, 'Ye shall not surely die,' engenders unbelief, and consequently the misery of all mankind. Some anciently did,† and the papists now do, assert the first sin of Adam to be pride; who hearing from his wife, that upon eating that fruit he should be as God, conceived aspiring thoughts in his own mind, affected a self-excellency and dependence, and left waiting upon God to bottom upon himself; for unless he had aimed higher than he ought to aim, he had continued in his innocent state. But what was the cause of this pride? Was it not giving credit to the words of the devil before the command and commination of God, regarding the precept as a falsity, and the threatening as a bugbear?‡ The first solicitation was to doubt of the veracity of God in his threatening, which they greedily swallowed, without any reflections upon the word of God spoken to them before; whence there was first an error in the understanding, before there was a

* Niremberg. de Adorat. lib. i. cap. vii. p. 45.

† Austin.

‡ Rivet. in Gen. Exercit. xxxii. p. 125. Calvin Instit. lib. ii. cap. i. parag. 4.

corrupt appetite in the will : for since the devil's assertion, that they ' should be as gods,' was contrary to God's threatening, that they should die, they could not receive that assertion for a truth, unless they first doubted of the truth of the divine threatening, or had quite forgot it. So that it can scarce be imagined how Adam should have a proud appetite without some act of infidelity preceding ; though after that pride grew up to some strength, the infidelity and aversion to God was increased. Pride and unbelief do mutually support and prop up one another. The first bait the devil laid was for unbelief : ver. 4, ' Ye shall not die.' And pride followed upon the heels : ver. 5, ' Ye shall be as gods.' Pride had scarce rose so high, had not infidelity first given it a lift. Now, when the fallen spirit had got more credit with man than the Creator, and had instilled into him a false notion of God, nothing appeared as a bar to any rebellion. When infidelity had set foot in the breach, it prepared the way for all the black legion which followed ; then the dominion of God is slighted, the law of creation broken, dependence on God rejected, man would be his own lord, his own all, and God should be nothing to him. And upon the account of this unbelief, and the consequents of it in Adam, he is not reckoned among those heroes commended for their faith, Heb. xi., not that Adam was void of faith in the promised Messiah ; for had he not believed that promise of a Redeemer, he would not have been careful to have transmitted it to his posterity, nor have taught Abel to sacrifice, who was instructed by his father in that religious service, as typical of the mediator, since we read of no new revelation made to Abel about him.* And it appears that God had instructed Adam in the offering of him ; whence should he be clothed with the skins of beasts, without the killing them, and that not for food, since no license was for that granted, that we read of, till after the deluge, but for sacrifice : and it cannot be supposed that Adam should be one hundred and twenty-nine years without regarding the great type of the mediator in sacrifices ; for in that year it is supposed Abel was killed, because Seth was born the one hundred and thirtieth year of Adam, Gen. v. 3.† But the reason perhaps is, because his first unbelief, whereby he was the author of the ruin of mankind, obscured the glory of his after faith, the Scripture continually setting him forth as the original of all our miseries, and opposing him to Christ the restorer : Rom. v. 14, ' Death reigned from Adam,' 1 Cor. xv. 22, 45, as also because the Scripture records no personal act of Adam after his fall, whereby his faith is evidenced to us. Unbelief was the sin of Adam, and faith the grace of Christ. Adam did not believe either the necessity of the precept, or infallibility of the threatening ; our Saviour believed the precepts, both of the moral and mediatory law, to obey them, and the promises of God in the covenant of redemption, to rest upon God in them. And by the way, we may see a reason why God will recover us in a way of faith, because we first apostatised from him for want of it ; he will have his honour restored by the creature's believing him, as it was first sullied by the creature's believing him.

[2.] Our unbelief is greater than Adam's, either than that before his fall, or in any act of it after the promise of redemption, or greater than his could be, supposing him to be a total unbeliever.

(1.) Greater than that before his fall. His was against a threatening, for we read of no promise made him before, though a promise is implied : Gen. ii. 17, ' Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,' and he

* Cloppenburg de sacrific. pp. 12, 13.

† Hyperius in Heb. xi. 4, p. 490.

was to live by his obedience ; ours against threatenings and promises also ; his sin was against creating goodness, not against a crucified Saviour ; that was ingratitude to God as Creator, ours ingratitude to God as Creator and Redeemer ; our redemption was with greater difficulty than our creation ; this was done by a word, and it was a verbal declaration Adam denied credit unto ; but the other was not without the death of the Son of God, a real testimony of God's veracity, superior to a bare verbal one. The creation met with no reluctancy in any attribute of God ; this, according to the scheme of divinity, for our more clear apprehension of the order of redemption, met with a reluctancy from justice. It could be no spot on the honour of God to create, it was a manifestation of his goodness, without any appearance of contradiction ; it might seem a blot upon his honour and kindness to his Son, to prefer the rebel world before the life and peace of his only begotten : his goodness to his creature seems to interfere with his goodness to his best beloved. Our unbelief and sin against the gospel, is of a more grisly hue in this respect than his, because against a manifestation of greater goodness. Ours is against a better covenant ; and if that brought confusion on the world, much more will this increase our confusion, as well as our sin. That was but against one threatening, ours against many threatenings and promises ; that, when the only person he had to converse with, viz., Eve, persuaded him to it ; ours, when many dissuade us from it ; not but that Adam's sin was very great, he not having a corrupted nature, the task appointed him being not hard, abstinence from one tree only enjoined him, with more ease to be kept than broken. To break it, therefore, was a presumptuous sin,* which is aggravated in that he received the restraint immediately from God, which Eve did not ; neither doth God speak with an audible voice from heaven to us, but by the mediation of his word transmitted to us from age to age ; yet in the former respects, our unbelief is of a deeper aggravation than his.

(2.) Greater than any act could be after his fall, or supposing him to be a total unbeliever. It had been still only against a word, and ours against a deed ; it had been against the mediator in a promise, ours against a mediator on the cross, and on the throne ; it had been against God promising, ours against God performing ; his had been against God assuring it, ours against God acting it ; his had been but against one promise, ours against many ; it had been when there was not one to give him an example of faith, ours is when we are encompassed with a ' cloud of witnesses,' Heb. xii. 1, referring to the catalogue of believers mentioned in chap. xi. Indeed, Adam's faith, and the faith of believers in the old world, condemns our want of it. He believed, when he had no experience of the performance of any truth but that in the threatening, nor the experience of any other that went before him ; but we have had the experience of God's making good his promise, and maintaining his gospel. We find the promise made to Adam, and all those concerning the Messiah made to the fathers, eminently performed ; the threatenings of God upon the unbelieving Jews, the crucifiers of the Redeemer, executed ; additional incentives to believe more than Adam had. We read but of one promise Adam and Abel, and the rest of the patriarchs before the flood, had, and we find not any one promise upon record made to the old world besides that first to Adam ; and, therefore, supposing Adam and the rest had been unbelievers, their unbelief had not been so black as ours, because we have so much more encouragement than they had, by how much a real performance doth exceed a verbal promise.

Consider, then, upon the whole, that every act of unbelief in us is an act-

* Kellat Miscel lib i. cap. iv. sect. vii. p. 68.

ing over the sin of Adam, an approbation of his miscarriage, which provoked God to pour down so many miseries upon the corrupted world. It is a sin, indeed, of that magnitude, that it equals everything in greatness, but that infinite mercy which can pardon it, and embrace the returning penitent.

(3.) Unbelief is a sin against the law of nature. There are two principles evident to man by the natural law;—

1. That God is to be believed.

2. Our happiness is to be desired and secured.

[1.] As unbelief is against a divine revelation, it is against the light of nature. Though nature cannot ascend to many truths before a revelation by God, yet, when the revelation is made, and reason sees the characters of divine authority upon it, or hath no cogent arguments against it, to deny it to be the mind and promise of God, not to believe it is a violation of the law of nature; because the poorest reason dictates this, that supposing God hath made a declaration of his will in any promise, or precept, or threatening, man is to believe what God promiseth or commands; because reason will tell him, that God cannot deceive, that veracity or truth is a necessary perfection of the divine nature; that God is able to perform what he promiseth, and therefore man is bound to believe what God promiseth, assent to it, accept of it; and believe what he commands, assent to it, and obey it. No reason can be rendered to prove anything in the world so certainly true as this principle, that I should believe God; if I do not believe him, I offend against the most indisputable principle of reason, against that which nature dictates. As no nation changeth their gods which they think to be gods, Jer. ii. 11, so no people can slight that which they think to be the mind of their God, without making a breach upon their own reason. In this case faith is to be considered two ways: as it is an assent to a revelation of God, or as it is a special instrument of apprehending, and laying hold on Christ for justification, &c. In the first sense, faith is a virtue we are obliged to by the light of nature; in the second sense, it is purely an evangelical grace. Now, the law of nature tells us, our Creator is to be credited in any proposition he makes; that our belief of him is a carriage due to him; that it is infinite goodness, he will condescend to reveal himself in ways of mercy to his creature; and that this divine goodness requires an answerable and suitable return; that whatsoever is revealed ought to be entertained by all the faculties of the soul, believed in the understanding, embraced by the will, and welcomed by all the affections; for all the faculties of the soul being created by God, ought, by the law of their creation, to rise up in a due respect to everything that flows from him. If so be, then, men do assent to the gospel to be of divine revelation, and pretend to believe the promises, precepts, and threatenings contained therein, to have the stamp of a divine authority upon them, and yet rise not up in a heartily welcoming the terms of it, and pay not a suitable allegiance to that which they account the will of God, they must needs consider themselves as violaters of the law of nature, and have reason to be sensible that the law of the creation will strengthen the evangelical sentence against them; for it is against the nature of a rational creature to neglect that which he is satisfied the author of his reason doth propose to him. And those that are not allured to God by that which they think to be an act of his love, are worse than beasts: they are not men, because they neglect that love which is the cord of a man, proper for the drawing him to God. Unbelief is a plain contradiction to divine revelation. If a man think the gospel to be of divine authority, his not embracing it ariseth from a conceit that the things proposed in it are not necessary to the attaining of happiness, or that they are not as conducing to it as other means

of his own invention ; that they are either useless, or not necessarily useful ; and in this he contradicts the law of nature, which prescribes an acquiescence in, and veneration of, anything which we have ground to think is of divine authority.

[2.] As it is against the principles of self-love. Since God hath revealed the way of the gospel, and men fancy to themselves either that they are not miserable, or that they can have some other remedy for their misery, they offend against that natural principle of self-preservation, and that in the highest concern imaginable, their eternal happiness and avoiding an eternally doleful misery. In the gospel, there are set forth pardon, peace, blessedness in heaven to the believer ; death, hell, judgment to the unbeliever. The natural principle of self-love, if listened to, will direct a man to dread the misery and thirst for the happiness. There is so much light in every man, as to affect and desire a blessed immortality ; for he believes there is a God, he believes that his soul is immortal, he hath natural arguments to evince that there is a state of happiness or misery after this life. He may know that he could never come out of God's mint in such a rude and filthy posture wherein he finds himself, that he was created for higher ends than those he doth commonly pursue ; that there is no blessedness but in the enjoyment of some higher good than any he finds in the world ; that this blessedness doth consist in the fruition of God ; that there must be some way of attaining this : Ps. iv. 6, ' There be many that say, Who will shew us any good ? ' Who will free us from this labyrinth of misery wherein we are involved ? is the voice of sensible nature. Then, natural reason may step in and conclude that this way proposed in the gospel is the most rational way, and though there be some mysteries in it above the ken of natural reason, and too dazzling for it ; yet, taking it in the whole combination, it gives a fuller content to natural and unbiassed reason, with salves for the honour of God, and means for the happiness of the creature, than any religion doth. Now, when the gospel proposeth things naturally desirable by man, with means to attain those good things, and motives, from the transcendent love and grace of God to the creature, to excite his industry, for a man not to believe, is to put himself in a way of contradiction to his own natural desires, to cross his own happiness, fall out with himself, and stifle that principle of self-preservation which is natural to him, with all other creatures in their several kinds ; and this principle is contradicted in every step unbelief takes in the world. I do not, by this discourse, ascribe any clearness to natural reason in the things of the gospel, or that man hath by nature a principle of a ready compliance with it, but that the happiness the gospel proposeth is naturally desirable and desired by all men ; but it is not entertained by men because of their natural enmity against it, not against the good things proposed in it, but against the means and methods which God hath ordered for the attainment of them, viz. by a way of faith, a principle the pride of reason cavils with. It is man's enmity, and not his ignorance, makes him reject that in the gospel, which he desires by his natural constitution as a rational creature ; and this is such a folly, which admits of no excuse, to refuse those things which are the most gratifying excellences in themselves, for a vanishing trash, a lust, which is but a magazine of torments, and treasury of everlasting wrath.

So that to conclude this, since it is confessed, I suppose, by all of us, that the gospel is of divine revelation, that the happiness the gospel doth propose is desirable, if we do not heartily embrace it in the terms of it, we contradict the two clearest principles acknowledged by all men in the world by the light of nature ; we practically deny that what God reveals ought to be entertained, and we act against that natural love to ourselves, which is the rule of the love

we owe to others, and which is so riveted in the creature that it cannot cease, but with a dissolution and annihilation of its being. It can never be blotted out of the damned in hell, and in both respects we violate the clearest dictates of nature.

(4.) Unbelief is the cause of all the abominations and neglects of God committed by men under the gospel. Besides that unbelief hath been the cause in Adam of all the sins whereby the law is violated and God grieved. it is the cause of all sins where the gospel is preached. As man first fell because he did not believe God's threatening, so, since the revelation of Christ, he continues in sin, because he will not believe God's promises. He is not like to be controlled by any reason, or diverted from letting loose the reins to any lust, who will not give any credit to God, either promising, commanding, or threatening; for as faith unites us to an holy God and a spotless Saviour, whereby we become holy, so unbelief unites us to an impure devil, who, by the help of this, engenders monstrous iniquities in the soul; so that it may be said of this, as the apostle, James iii. 6, saith of the tongue, 'It is a fire, a world of iniquity; it defiles the whole soul, sets on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell.' It is the ringleader of all sin in the world, and the common incendiary that puts to the fire when any bullet is shot against God, and therefore hath a sinfulness in it above other sins, because it gives life and spirit to them all. The reason is plain, because the will moves to the embracing of things according as the understanding judgeth them to be good, and refuseth them as the understanding judgeth them to be evil.* If the motion of the will, therefore, be not towards God, but to the filth of the world, it is because the understanding is erroneous, not fully possessed with a belief that God is, and that he hath promised those good things declared in the gospel; for the will cannot have any motion which is not one way or other determined by the understanding; and when the understanding is possessed by ill notions of things, it is an *ignis fatuus*, and the will is apt to be misled by it into any slough.

Which appears several ways.

[1.] Faith is the root of all other graces; unbelief must, therefore, be the foundation of all other sins.† Faith and unbelief are contrary, and therefore have contrary effects; fear of God, or faith in God, is the beginning of wisdom, Prov. ix. 10; infidelity is the flood-gate through which all impiety enters. When we want faith to give credit to God, we shall have enough to give credit to the devil, who suits our humour. By faith Abraham obeyed God, Heb. xi. 8. Had not Abraham had faith in the promise, he had never obeyed God in sacrificing his Isaac; and where there is a want of faith in God, there will not be a sacrificing one Isaac for him. Not one sin but will be engendered in the womb of this, as well as not one grace but grows up from the womb of faith. As faith purifies the heart, so unbelief fills it with loathsome guests. No grace can be planted where unbelief is rooted, no more than corn can thrive where the ground is overgrown with weeds. Branches may as well flourish without a root, as any grace be planted without faith. An unbeliever is a dead man, deprived of the image of God, and liable to all kind of putrefaction, bearing the mark of the devil upon his soul, void of the Spirit of God, which is the principle of life. As it is the property of faith to work by love, so it is the contrary property of unbelief to work by enmity to, and hatred of, God. As faith is a going out of ourselves to God to please him, so unbelief is a departing from the living God, to ourselves and everything that is at variance with him.

* Mestrezat. ser. v. sur. Hebr. iii. p. 222.

† Contrariorum contrariæ sunt affectiones et contraria effecta.

[2.] If we consider every particular sin, this of unbelief will appear to be the cause of it. Why are men proud? Because they believe not God resists them. Why are men covetous? Because they believe not that God abhors it at the same rate with the sin of idolatry. Why are men uncharitable to others in their necessities? Because they believe not that he that gives to the poor lends to the Lord. Why are men ignorant? Because they believe not the word concerns them; therefore ignorance and unbelief are put together, 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. Why are men lulled in security in their treacherous ways with God? Because they bely the Lord, and count the prophet's words no firmer than wind, Jer. v. 11-13. Why do not men fear him? Because they believe neither his goodness nor justice. Why do not men seek after God? Because his judgments are far above out of their sight, Ps. x. 5; they believe not their march towards them. What is the reason men neglect addresses to God, or pray so rarely or coldly? Because they believe him not to be a God hearing prayer, or believe not Christ to be an advocate. Why do men make show of religion to serve an interest or lust? Because they believe not God to be a searcher of the heart and a trier of the reins. Why did Sarah laugh and mock at the promise of God? Because she considered more the weakness of her age than the faithfulness and power of the promiser, Gen. xviii. 11, 12; she first imagined the promise false, that God mocked her, thence she fell to mocking God, and then to lying. Why did the Israelites murmur against God? Because they did not believe him for all the signs he had shewn among them, Num. xiv. 11. Do not our hearts in afflictions sink into fears, because we believe not God's sovereign wisdom and fatherly love in the ordering of them? Why do we fear man that shall die? Because we forget the Lord our maker, Isa. lxi. 12, 13. And why do we seek unlawful means to help ourselves? Because we believe not either the tenderness or all-sufficiency of his providence. What is the reason men are unreasonable and wicked, always persecuting them that would live godly? Because they have not faith, 2 Thes. iii. 2. Apostasy and hardness of heart are the births of this fruitful monster, Heb. iii. 12, 13. The evil heart of unbelief causeth to depart from the living God; he that undervalues the promise will not cleave to the precept, and makes no scruple to hurl away that which he believes not to be true, and change religion as the state changes profession. All miscarriages may be traced to this as their prime spring; it is therefore called not simply unbelief, but an evil heart of unbelief, that which gives advantage to the devil to pour all the floods of wickedness into the heart. What rebellions against God, resistance of the Spirit, contempt of ordinances, will he not engage in who believes God a liar? Not any sin in the world but may be found in this sink; I may therefore call it the original sin under the gospel, as infidelity was the original sin in Adam under the covenant of works. Where this unbelief is partial, all defects in believers themselves must be ascribed to it. Whatsoever deviations there are from the precepts of the gospel are either from an habitual unbelief, or the remainders of it in the heart; they are either from a want of faith in the habit or in the act. Christ evidenceth this in his prayer for Peter, that his faith might not fail, Luke xxii. 32. Where faith fails, the soul will sink into any sin. His weakness of faith was the cause of his sad fall, and a total want of it had kept him under the power of it for ever as well as Judas; and though a total dissent from or a contradiction to the truth of the gospel, as considered as truth, be inconsistent with the nature and temper of a true Christian, yet there is too often such an unbelief, which is a want of a due esteem and value of the things of

the gospel, which is the wicket and breach whereby sin enters, and plays *rex* sometimes in them.

[3.] Unbelief slights that which can only enable us to conquer sin. The end of Christ's coming was to 'finish transgression and to make an end of sin,'* to stop the flood of iniquity which had overflowed the world from the day of Adam's fall, to restrain it from exercising that empire and authority it had usurped in the earth. Though this was not the motive to God to send Christ, yet it was a main end of his mission; for it consisted not with the holiness or sovereignty of God to have a satisfaction made for sin without a destruction of the body of sin. It had also been a design below the love the Redeemer bore to his Father and to us, to free us only from our guilt, and let us remain under the power of our sin. And indeed Christ freed us from the curse of the law, that we might with more cheerfulness walk in the precepts of it; and reconciled an offended God, that we might be capable of a new and spiritual service of him. Faith is the first grace wrought in the soul in pursuance of the end of the death of Christ, to pull down thereby the corruption which had swayed the sceptre so many ages. Unbelief, then, being contrary to this, slights all those helps and assistances against transgression, and preserves sin in its full authority and command in the soul. It keeps a man from complying with this design of God in Christ, and stakes the soul down in its slavery to sin. An unbeliever cannot perform any real service to God, because where the tree is not good, the fruit cannot be good. He is off from, and hates the root, which can only convey sap to him for the bringing forth such fruits which are acceptable to God: John xv. 3-5, 'Without me you can do nothing,' nothing savoury to God. 'As the branch cannot bring forth fruit, except it abide in the vine,' and partake of its juice. They cannot pray, which is a main help against the power of sin; for 'how can they call upon him in whom they have not believed?' Rom. x. 14. It keeps in vigour all the principles of sin, encourageth and welcomes all the motions to sin, though it doth not always put them forth visibly into act, because of some external impediments. It bars the heart against true principles of service, and the assistances the Holy Ghost proffers, and thwarts God in that which was one of his principal designs. It repels those promises and threatenings which are the arms of the gospel; promises of life to the believer, and denunciations of death to the unbeliever, Mark xvi. 16, whereby souls are conquered to a submission to it, and a war against their lusts. The promises are alluring, the threatenings affrighting; both suited to the nature of man for the restoring his affections. Unbelief now disparageth the promises of the gospel, slights the threatenings of the gospel, pulls back from any consideration of them, whereby they lose their edge and efficacy. Who will ever spend time in the consideration of that which he thinks to be false? As the life of grace lies in consideration, so the life of sin lies in a neglect of it, which is occasioned by unbelief. It is by the means of the promises the heart is cleansed, 2 Cor. vii. 1, and by the not believing them the heart is kept stuffed with that filth it had.† For it supposeth a want of faith, that intrinsic principle whereby we can only obtain help and remedy against sin. The word cannot be operative, because there is not faith to believe. Had not Adam believed that promise God made him after his first infidelity, of the seed of the woman, he had approved of his former unbelief, and rejected God's design of restoring him to his service and duty; which every son of Adam doth, that complies not with the performance of that promise. God's end in sending

* Dan. ix. 24, לָשׁוּב signifies to restrain, shut up, or consume.

† Suarez.

Christ was to bruise the serpent's head; unbelief would either shield his head, or apply a plaster to it for a cure.

[4.] Unbelief maintains every sin in strength. Unbelief being a departing from the living God, the further the separation from God, the stronger the empire and tyranny of sin. For as grace is most vigorous when faith is most firm, so, on the contrary, sin must be strongest when unbelief is most powerful. It is the great support and pillar of the devil's kingdom, which must totter and fall to the ground if this did expire. So much strength, therefore, as unbelief hath in any, so much strength hath every sin, which either the constitution inclines to, or the temptation allures to. It is the protector of every sin, which would else lie bare to the strokes of the Spirit. As faith is a shield against the darts of the devil, Eph. vi. 16, so this is a shield against the sword of the Spirit. Faith is 'the victory whereby we overcome the world,' 1 John. v. 4. Unbelief is the victory whereby the world and every sin overcomes us. There is no unbeliever but, being in his natural condition, hath the strength of all sin in his heart lying in garrison. Where unbelief reigns, the heart is evil, Heb. iii. 12; though this strength is not always in exercise, as the forces of a garrison are not always in action; restraining grace may check it, but nothing but faith can kill it. Not one sin could maintain its ground without unbelief. This, as a stout general, spirits the whole army. No sin can receive its death's-wound till this Goliath be laid grovelling in the dust; then doth the army of the Philistines lose both their hopes and courage. Sin, indeed, may suffer some damage by moral considerations, and the soul be wrought upon by some affectionate discourses; but as long as this champion stands in defence, sin will not be utterly defeated: it will rally and recover its ground; for while the main cause of drawing back from God continues, the effect will follow upon occasion. And, therefore, when men, after much profession, glowing affections, and godly reformatations, and continuance some time in them, fall back again to their old styles, you may conclude they never had faith, which would have wounded their lusts with a deadly blow, as well as moral considerations curbed them with a weak bridle. Such reformatations proceed from a work upon the affections, not upon the judgment, which perhaps hath a suspicion that the things of the gospel may be true, but never was possessed with an entire belief of the truth of them. Unbelief is the purveyor to feed sin, and the protector to defend it. As faith grows, all other sins decay; as unbelief grows, all other sins, by virtue of that, maintain their standing.

[5.] It excites all kind of sin in the heart. As the gospel received by faith opposeth all sin, 'teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts,' Titus ii. 12, so this principle, opposite to the gospel, teacheth us to cherish all sin. As the more faith is exercised, the more other graces traverse the stage (for as they depend upon faith in regard of their being, so they do also in regard of their exercise), so the more unbelief is exercised, the more all kind of sin is stirred up and quickened in the heart. As the gospel is enriched with all motives and directions to what is righteous before God, and comely before man, wherein whatsoever hath moral beauty, or is of honourable esteem among men, that desire to walk according to right reason, is commended and pressed with the highest injunctions, which, if observed by men under the gospel, would make the earth a paradise, restore the honour of God, and the beauty of the creation. So unbelief disgraceth these principles, degrades them from that esteem they deserve in the hearts of men, discountenanceth that which is spiritually noble and worthy, alarms the corrupt nature, brings the force of it into the field against the principles of the gospel. Therefore, where the gospel doth not refine and reform men by the operation of faith,

men are rendered worse, more awkward towards God, and spiritually wicked by the operation of unbelief, which is, *per accidens*, the effect of the gospel; as physic that doth not work and expel the humours, gives them advantage to rage more in the body. As the gospel profits when mixed with faith, so it is wholly unprofitable when mixed with unbelief. Sin thereby draws rather an encouragement from it, and takes occasion from thence to become more furious. Hence is that rage commonly against the gospel, when it comes into any place where before it was not. The devil works by the unbelief of man to excite all the strength of corrupt nature against it, to stop the course of it; and what hath been done in the world in the times of the apostles, and will be done to the end of the world, is a picture of what men do secretly in their own hearts against the principles of it, by the strength of their infidelity, which stirs up all the serpentine principles in the heart against it.

[6.] It denies all that evil which God hath testified that there is in sin. When God, by the sending of Christ, hath witnessed to the world what a boundless filth there is in sin, that could not be washed off by oceans of blood, or purged by the firing of the whole world, or pardoned upon the solicitations of men and angels, no, nor can by the intercession of the Son of God, without his death too; as faith by closing with Christ, and the terms of the gospel, acknowledgeth all this evil in sin, so unbelief, by rejecting him, avows the contrary, regards that as good which God declares to be the greatest evil, respects that as comely which God hath declared to be most loathsome and monstrous, prefers its own judgment of sin before the holiness and judgment of God, which he hath manifested of it in the death of Christ.

(5.) Unbelief possesseth the choicest faculties of the soul. Other sins are more seated in the sensitive appetite: this in the understanding and will. Other vices may arise from the humours of the body; anger and pride owe their birth to a predominant choler; wantonness and lust to a fulness of blood; laziness and idleness stream from a lake of phlegm; fearfulness, jealousy, covetousness, and envy, from a dusky melancholy; but unbelief ariseth from the ignorance of the understanding and perversity of the will, and most from the latter, where it hath its principal seat: John v. 40, 'You will not come to me that you might have life.' In the proposal of the gospel there are two things to be considered, the truth and the goodness; under which double consideration it is proposed. As it is true, faith embracing it, and unbelief rejecting it, are in the understanding; as it is good, faith entertaining it, and unbelief refusing it, are in the will. The falsity and ignorance of unbelief is *subjectivè* in the mind. Contraries are conversant about the same subject. Faith is in the understanding, and therefore infidelity, which is opposite to it, is in the same subject; the malice of unbelief is in the will, as the principal act of faith, whereby it receives Christ, is in the will. A man's wilfulness is the cause that he doth not believe; he doth not believe because he will not believe. That is a great sin which possesseth the supreme faculties, and taints them more than any; and the more of the will is in any sin, the blacker is that sin.

(6.) It is most odious to God. If he delights in 'them that hope in his mercy,' Ps. xxxiii. 18, he must abominate them that think scorn to entertain it. It would bar God from all opportunities of dispensing his chiefest goodness; the fullest fountain would run in vain, and the richest feast be in vain provided. 'Without faith it is impossible to please God,' Heb. xi. 6. Though a man had the quintessence of all the moral virtues that any heathen was ever enriched with, no man can please God but by Christ, no man can

have Christ but by faith. Those therefore that hear of Christ, and embrace him not in the whole latitude as he is proposed as an object of faith, are the highest displeasers of God. Without some sort of faith it was impossible to please God, even in a state of innocence; Adam could not observe a precept, fear a threatening, nor hope in a promise, unless he believed him.* But unbelief, since Christ is proposed, contains in it the greatest ingratitude to God, when God prevents the creature by the offers of love, and when God is offended, yet seeks reconciliation, not only with those who have offended him and begin to cease from it, but with those that actually offend him while he is seeking peace with them, 'when we were yet sinners,' Rom. v. 8. Men are called while they are actually in arms. Christ doth most reprove his disciples for this; they had ambition and passion, many infirmities; yet we find our Saviour chiding them for nothing but their unbelief, or, at least, not so severely, Mark xvi. 4, and ix. 19, Luke xxiv. 25. He upbraids those cities wherein mighty works were done, 'because they believed not.' God was most angry with Moses for his unbelief. This affronts God most; this is the object of his greatest anger and greatest hatred, and therefore the greatest sin.

Use. If unbelief be the greatest sin.

I. Of information.

1. We may here take a view of the infinite patience and condescending grace of God, to those that have a weakness of faith with a great mixture of unbelief.

(1.) His patience. This sin being so black as hath been described, a reproaching him in all his attributes, and Christ in his gracious design, worse than the unbelief of the Jews, much of the same nature with the first sin of the devils, it is a wonder of patience that God suffers such a mountain of sin to cumber the ground, since it reacheth as high as heaven and dares the glorious throne of God, that God should not cut off those thorns which are continually galling him, and fling them into the fire. Man is not so impatient under anything as disgrace; God bears infinitely more reproaches by this sin than all the men in the world ever bore, yet he hath as infinite a patience to bear them as he hath power to punish them. None but a God could spare such affronting sinners, and endure so many scorns without evidences of wrath, and have an unwearied patience under such a wearying sin: Isa. vii. 13, 'Will you weary my God also?' which is spoken of Ahaz his unbelief, as was explained in the beginning of the discourse.

(2.) His grace and condescension,

[1.] In the continuance of his gracious offers where the unbelief is total. Astonishing kindness! that after the first refusal of Christ, and repeated acts of infidelity, God should still call and cry, come down from heaven and knock; that grace should still solicit the sinner, when that, and all the train of attributes attending it, are thrust off and violently struck at by this sin. The first offer of Christ is a fruit of amazing grace, but the repetition after such indignities is more hyperbolical, when he quickens his solicitations of men under a sin of so high a provocation. Not any man possessed with the grace of faith but hath withstood many invitations, disgraced the wisdom, faithfulness, goodness, and holiness of God; accused him of the greatest falsity, represented him more base and deceitful than the worst of men or devils; and this after God hath raised the strongest bulwark against it, and given the fullest assurance to make void their suspicions of him; himself contriving redemption, his Son acting it, his Spirit applying it, as if all their

* Lingend. tom. iii. p. 250.

employment were about this affair; yet they have maintained their incredulity. When we consider this, and the doubts and jealousies when we first set foot toward heaven, we cannot cease from wonder that ever God should receive us.

[2.] In his gracious communications where there is a partial unbelief. It is admirable that when this, though partial, is such a reflection upon God, that he doth not alter his methods, forbear the communications of his grace, when we are often doubting of the stability of that grace. He is firm to his truth in the midst of men's falseness to him, Rom. iii. 3; the unbelief of men shall not make the faith or fidelity of God of none effect; the unbelief of that nation did not hinder his entrusting his oracles with them. As the truth of God was immutable to those that believed of the Jewish nation, though the unbelief of the most was very gross, so he will be faithful to the believer, though there be a mixture of the sin contrary to that faith where-with he is endowed. Moses and Aaron believed not God to sanctify him, Num. xx. 12. Moses his unbelief was great, in striking the rock twice when he should have but spoken to it; yet God was so gracious as not to deny that effect to his unbelief which he had assured to his faith; he stopped not the influence of his power, though Moses had weakened the hand of his faith; 'he caused waters to gush out of the rock abundantly,' ver. 11. When this hath put forth itself in act, God hath been so indulgent as to repeat his promise for the strengthening of a fainting faith. When Abraham, after a twofold promise, Gen. xii. 2, xiii. 16, began to question God's truth, because he did not yet see the seed promised him, and his years increased, Gen. xv. 3, 'What wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?' a querulous speech, discovering an act of infidelity immediately after a third gracious promise from God, ver. 2, 'Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.' To this his answer seems to be, 'What reward wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the Saviour of the world is not like to come out of my loins, since I have not that seed promised so long since?' God doth not chide him for this so severe a charge, but graciously renews his promise and strengthens his faith, vers. 3-6, 'He that shall come forth out of thy own bowels shall be thy heir; and thy seed shall be as the number of the stars.' And when after this no seed came so suddenly as he expected, he listens to Sarah's counsel and goes in to Hagar, Gen. xvi. 4, as if he was resolved to wait upon the promise no longer; yet God is so far from stripping him of that glorious title of father of the faithful, that he condescends to shore up his faith by a new promise, Gen. xvii. 1, 2, &c.; and the more to strengthen his drooping faith, changeth his name Abram into Abraham,* which signifies a father of my people, that he might remember the promise every time he should think of his name. It was given him after his distrust of the former promises in the business of Hagar. David takes notice of the indulgence of God to him in this case, when his diffidence of God hath hurried him so far as positively to assert that he was 'cut off from before the eyes of God,' Ps. xxxi. 32, that God had no more kindness for him, or remembrance of his own promise, 'yet nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications.' Though he had had so many promises from God of a kingdom, yet he said in his haste all men were liars, Samuel too, and in that reflected upon God, whose errand Samuel delivered. Some of those weapons brandished against me will one time or other reach me, and little hold is to be taken of the words of the prophets, which are but a pack of lies; yet as long as he left not praying, God left not answering. Scarce a gracious answer a good man hath but he may put a *nevertheless* to it, because of that distrust of God which is

mixed with his petitions. When by a partial unbelief, starting from us, we question his truth, bespot his wisdom, forget his kindness, have low thoughts of his sufficiency; yet all the aggravations in this sinful act (if there be a true faith, as a grain of mustard seed), silence not the voice of his bowels, dam not up the torrent of his love, he will take occasion from thence to magnify his grace. When Peter seemed to have had his little faith covered with the rubbish of his unbelief, and the faith of the disciples seemed to be dead and buried, with the apprehension of Christ by the Jewish officers, he was then going to pay their debts, redeem their souls, bind up their bones, and make an everlasting peace between God and them. And when Thomas persisted still in his infidelity of the resurrection of Christ, he doth not only shew himself to him with particular evidences of the reality of his resurrection in the marks of his hands and feet; but inspires him with a particular sentiment of his Deity, which no man before did so explicitly acknowledge: John xx. 28, 'My Lord, and my God.' Not that unbelief is a motive to Christ to do so, but he will take occasion from it to make his grace triumph over the worst of sins. Since the nature of this sin is full of so horrid a malignity, it makes the condescensions and indulgence of God appear more admirable.

2. Information. Here is a high encouragement to faith and acceptance of Christ. We cannot sin worse by coming to him than by not believing in him. How many stave themselves off from an acceptance of God's offers by a sense of their own unworthiness! Suppose it were an offence to approach to him with a humbled unworthiness, can there be that blackness in it as there is in drawing back from him? We do not then fling dirt in the face of those attributes which were illustrious in the work of redemption; we do not then blemish his truth, and represent him as one that hath no care of his royal word; we debase not the credit of his promise, nor do we cast any aspersion upon his wisdom, or go about to frustrate the design of his contrivance, nor do we vilify his grace, or spurn at his beating heart, nor count the unsearchable riches of his mercy as loathsome dung. Nor do we disparage the power of God, as if he could not be as great and as good as his word; nor do we declare that we can shift well enough without him, neither do we strike at his sovereignty in contradicting his fixed will and royal law of faith, nor do we rob him of his delight; nor do we pierce our Saviour afresh, nor vilify the price he paid for our redemption; we deny not his love, his wisdom, his excellency, sufficiency, or reward; we cast no dirt in the face of the contriver and executor of redemption. But all this we do in as gross a manner as if we should verbally disown him, if we believe not. Nor can our sins be diminished one article in their guilt by keeping from him. Can we pay the debt out of our small revenue? A farthing a year cannot pay the interest of a thousand pound, much less the principal. Doth God command us to believe in Christ? Why should we disobey our God, add a greater weight to our load? Have we not sinned against justice, wisdom, common providence? Shall we draw the black colours of unbelief over all the rest, and despise all his attributes in a higher manner by refusing the blood of his Son, which his love offers us? Can we lessen our sins by turning our backs upon his bowels, and have the fruit of the death of Christ by endeavouring to disappoint him of the end of it? Is it not, then, an encouragement to us to come over to Christ by faith, since in doing it we come out of the territories of the most malignant sin, and the most desperate enemy of God, and pay the honour which is due to his glorious perfections from every creature?

3. How unworthy is the carriage of every unbeliever! He is digging at

the very foundation of the throne of grace. The delights of Christ were among the sons of men, yet naturally we run from him as if it were a death to be with him, as if he were our greatest enemy. We cannot pull God out of heaven, we cannot nail Christ again to the cross, we cannot pierce his heart with a spear, we cannot revile him to his face as the Jews did; but slighting the purchase of his death, despising the conditions upon which it is to be enjoyed, disowning his authority granted by heaven over us, is the only thing, and it is too much, that we do against him. This every unbeliever doth; he despoils him, as much as in him lies, of his reward; frustrates the design of his suffering, the expiation of sin, the propagation and observation of his evangelical law. He that disowns and would destroy the dearest thing Christ hath left in the world, that which he gave the greatest charge for the preservation of, would act all the villanies against his person were he again in the world. He doth as much as the devil himself can do. All that he can do is to trample upon his law, increase the unbelief of men in the world. He can do no more, and every unbeliever doth as much: 'The lusts of your father you will do,' John viii. 44.

The dignity of Christ's person greatens the enormity of unbelief, because 'he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God,' John iii. 18. It outrageth not a man, nor an angel, but the only Son of God, in the truth of his word, the majesty of his person, the greatness of his undertaking, and the kindness of his sufferings.* God hath but one Son, and him it despiseth, and in his person contemns the Father. It is no less than marriage to his Son that he propounds when he offers Christ; and who would not contemn† the carriage of a beggar, that should refuse being a prince's spouse? This is to refuse the imitation of angels who worship him, for the imitation of devils who hate him.

Now the carriage of unbelief to God in Christ is,

1. Irrational.
2. Ingrateful.
3. Inexcusable.
4. Miserable.

1. Irrational. (1.) In those that own not the gospel as a revelation of God, which many of the heathen philosophers regarded as a piece of folly, 'to the Greeks foolishness,' 1 Cor. i. 23; they could not imagine a crucified God, or so little affection in God to an only Son, as to let him be put to death, and an infamous death too. But, alas! they had more unreasonable notions of their gods than this could possibly appear to be. It is true, their notions are exploded out of the world, but we may thereby see how unreasonable men are in the rejecting the gospel upon any principles whatsoever. They talk of their adulterous gods, their cheating Mercuries, hectoring Marses, and lustful Venuses, and of gods wounded in battles. Is not a dying God for the ends of virtue, more reasonable than an adulterous god for the ends of vice? Is not a God pierced for the happiness of mankind, and preservation of human nature, more reasonable than a god wounded in skirmishes? Is it not as reasonable to be believed that God should become man, as a man become a god? which was a notion frequent among them in their deifying men; but none now have such gross conceits of the divine Majesty. But as some scarce own the being of a God, so they quite disown the design and reasonableness of the gospel, which is as ancient as the world within a few hours, transmitted from one age to another by a succession of promises, frequency of prophecies, all centring in, and receiving their accomplishment in Christ. So that if any will receive the ancient testimonies of the pro-

* Daillé in loc.

† Qu. 'condemn'?—ED.

phets, which no reasonable man can deny, there being more clear evidence of the antiquity of the books of the Old Testament, than for any writing whatsoever, owned by the heathens to have something divine in it, and preserved by the Jews' enemies, or that which they represented, and represented so clearly, that whosoever shall read of a Messiah to be cut off after sixty-two weeks, Dan. ix. 26, from the building of the temple, and that to make an end of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to put an end to any prophecy of the Messiah, the Jews not being able to shew one prophet since the crucifying of Christ; whosoever shall read the 53d of Isaiah, of the tender plant without comeliness, despised and rejected of men, acquainted with grief, carrying our sorrows, bearing iniquity, oppressed and not opening his mouth, making his grave with the wicked, and the rich in his death, making his soul an offering for sin, and after having a portion divided with the great, because he poured out his soul to death; whoever shall read the prophecy of one pierced, one born in Bethlehem, 'whose goings out were from everlasting,' Micah v. 2, and afterwards consider the story of our Saviour's life and death, cannot reasonably deny that this is the very person described in the prophecy.* Whosoever shall consider the prophecies of the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, and the sanctuary, with a flood of desolation, Dan. ix. 26, after the cutting off the Messiah, and see that people now without a king, without a prince, or high priest, an image, an ephod, without a sacrifice, Hosea iii. 4. more years than ever both their temples stood, must reasonably conclude it a fruit of their own wish, that the blood of him whom they would not own as their Messiah, might be upon them and upon their children, Mat. xxvii. 25. One great reason men do not believe the gospel, or believe in Christ, is because they are unacquainted with the prophetic part of Scripture. Buxtorf, in his *Synagoga Judaica*, conjectures this is a great reason of the Jews' obstinacy, they are so intent upon the law that they scarce mind the prophets; and Christ himself, in his rebuke of his disciples, intimates this, 'O fools, and slow of heart to believe all which the prophets have spoken!' Luke xxiv. 25. To deny a gospel that hath been propagated with a glorious success, confirmed by a train of miracles, acknowledged in the writings of the heathens who lived in the primitive times, witnessed by the blood of martyrs, and those of the wiser and learned sort, who could not all surely be a parcel of melancholy fools! And shall this have no better a reception, than if it were a mere romance, and an impertinent fable? Common reflections upon ourselves after this revelation, will lead us to think some divine stamp upon it. It is obvious to a considering rationalist, that man is not upon a right basis, that he is strangely amiss, that it is inconsistent with the goodness and holiness of God, to let man come in such a posture at first out of his hands. He sees how little he can determine anything with certainty in his understanding, that he hath not that affection to God which nature will teach him he ought to have, that he doth not glorify God as his own reason will inform him he ought to do; he must conclude, that if ever divine goodness hath designed and revealed a way for the restoration of man to his service, the restoration of the world to the end of his glory, for which it was created, he can find nothing that doth propose it, promise it, and assure it, but the gospel. But let such that disown the gospel consider (and though perhaps there are none here that opinionatively are infidels, yet there is no man but hath some motions sometimes against the authority of the gospel, as well as atheistical thoughts against the being of a God, which need sometimes some consideration to stop the tide); I say, let them consider,

* Sic ille manus, sic ora ferebat.

that those things they prefer before the gospel, are not in their own account of any great and durable worth; they cannot attend any beyond the gate of death; some thing there is of concern in another world; the opinions they entertain have as little ground of certainty, as anything else which the gospel doth not declare. The best account of things, with the most likely reason that ever was extant, is in the Scripture; for there is nothing seems to be wanting for the glory of God, and the duty and happiness of a creature. And therefore it is but a reasonable proposal that we should entertain that, and conform our judgments and practices to it, till we meet with a better account, that makes more for the divine honour and the creatures' welfare. If any scheme more satisfactory for such high and glorious ends can be proposed, it is fit it should be entertained. But till such a one be found out, and have as many, and as manifest confirmations as this hath had, it is reason that till then this should have the pre-eminence. Who, that were under a raging disease, would not use the best remedy he could find, till he met with a better? For as it is unreasonable for any man to deny that debt of obedience he owes to God as Creator, so it is unreasonable to deny a rule to guide him in the way of obedience to, and worship of, God, till he can find one more rational in itself, more honourable for God, and more serviceable to the creatures' interest. Is it not unreasonable to require the same evidence in things of faith as in matters of nature? Is it not unreasonable to deny that which hath stronger arguments to back the authority of it, than what can be drawn from sense and reason, for the proof of the being of anything in the world? Is it not unreasonable for us to follow our own humours, fancies, purblind reason, groping for happiness in other things, while we refuse the way that hath the clearest characters upon it of anything in the world? It were worth our knowledge what religion such men would have, who will not believe the matter of the gospel; a religion it is supposed they would have, if they own the being of God; for a religious worship is a natural consequence from such an acknowledgment. The worship of the heathens cannot but appear ridiculous; there is not a man to be found, unless among the more stupid sort of nations, that will apologise for that. The Jewish cannot, according to the rules of that religion, be practised; for they cannot sacrifice, since they have no temple wherein to perform that service. Besides, sacrifices being practised in all nations, for the expiation of sin, it cannot be supposed that the blood of any creature can make atonement for the sin of the soul, or outward purifications by water wash off the impurities of an immaterial spirit. The Mahometan is too sensual for any rationalist to embrace. There is none then left but the Christian to be embraced: the great command of that is faith; it forbids all those sins which moral nature loathes, and unbelief besides. The rule of it is the Scripture, and whatsoever is not according to that, whatsoever worship or doctrine men coin that is not according to that rule, is not religion, is not worship, it is no revelation of God.

(2.) No less irrational is it in those that own the gospel to be a divine revelation for such high ends, and do not in heart and practice subscribe to the goodness and methods of it. For men that hear the language of God, pretend they believe the voice of the gospel to be the voice of God, that Christ is the Son of God, that he shed his blood for a ransom for souls; yet not to accept of this ransom, to slight the benefit of it; not to conform to one of those conditions upon which it is offered; not leave a lust for Christ, or forego a pleasure for him; to believe no more than agrees with their humour, interest, or fancy,—this is a most unworthy carriage to God, and to a man's self, to pretend one thing, and do another; to profess an acknow-

ledgment of it in our understandings, and refuse a subscription to it with our wills. It is a thousand times better for a man to strip himself of the name of a Christian, than to have a practical unbelief inconsistent with the truth of a Christian. With what face can a man profess Christ to be his Lord and master, and yet regard not any order he gives? The heathens will stand up in judgment against such a nation, for they will confide in their idols, believe and conform to their oracles: 'All people will walk every one in the name of his god,' Micah iv. 5; and shall we deal worse with God than heathens did with idols? Shall we believe wicked men? why else do we make contracts and bargains? Shall we believe the earth? why else do we sow? Shall we believe the winds and waves? why else do we traffic? And is it not more reason to give credit to an infallible God? It is a great madness not to come up to the terms of that, which we confess is sealed by the blood of Christ, confirmed by the power of miracles, proclaimed by the apostles, admired by the angels, and confessed too by the devils themselves to be from God. What more unreasonable than to profess that Christ was appointed by God to remove our miseries, relieve our wants, purchase our happiness, expiate our sin, procure our peace, which we could not find a way ourselves to obtain, had we been befriended by the wit of angels, yet not comply with any one condition upon which he offers those transcendent blessings? Profession of him without a sound faith in him, is like the pharisees' garnishing the tombs of the prophets, while they hated the Redeemer they prophesied of. Gilded Bibles will not serve the turn with leaden hearts; and is it not as unreasonable in an humble soul to doubt of mercy? Surely as unreasonable as in an impenitent sinner to presume upon it. What hath God commended more than his mercy? What pleaseth him more than an humble confidence in it? What offends him more than for such an one to distrust it? Have we not in Christ the greatest encouragements to faith and confidence, since he is so near us, of the same nature with us, and came from heaven on purpose to 'take not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham,' Heb. ii. 16, and felt the misery of our nature, Heb. ii. 18, to the very end that he might have compassion on us; and hath offered himself up as a sacrifice for our sins? Shall not, then, that unbelief, that kicks against those foundations of hope, and disparages that which hath letters of commendation from heaven, be accounted an unreasonable thing?

2. It is also ungrateful. What else is it, to fly in the face of that love, which hath wrought out the way for us by blood? To slight him that would relieve us, wound him that would cure us; to live as if redemption had never been wrought, and disobey him for shewing love to us, is an ungrateful frenzy. When the Jews preferred Barabbas before Christ, and Judas valued thirty pieces of silver above him, was it not an ingratitude as well as an indignity? And is it not as great to value a soul-murdering lust above him, to be allured by a beastly pleasure to offend him, rather than by the heart-blood of the Son of God to please him? How often do we see, when the sun riseth to comfort the drooping earth, the earth sends out vapours and mists, as if it scorned any assistance from that heavenly body, and would strip it both of its life and influence, so necessary for the fruit it bears, and the inhabitants it nourisheth? Do not men send out the black vapours of their enmity and unbelief, at the appearance of the Sun of righteousness, as if they had a mind to choke in him all sentiments of kindness to them? Is not this unworthy, to dishonour him that would honour us, smite him who hath been wounded for us, pierce the heart of him who hath bled for our health? For 'by his stripes we are healed,' Isa. liii. 5, as if the cup he had drunk for us were not bitter enough. What wounds he received, were

for the satisfaction of God's justice, which was armed against him ; what wounds our unthankful unbelief gives him, is to the disparagement of that satisfaction. God did not stick to send his Son, but the world sticks at receiving him. The world is lost in Adam ; by the blood of his Son he finds them when they do not seek him, Isa. lxx. 1 ; and the unthankful world will not receive him when he offers himself to them, nor refuse it with a common civility ; not so much as a *No, I thank thee*, in the case, which is common among men upon refusal of an offered kindness.

3. It is inexcusable. There is no plea for it. The Jews had some plea for theirs ; he that was clothed with infirmities, and had no outward form or comeliness, nor any beauty and glory according to their expectations, might better indeed be 'despised and rejected' of them, Isa. liii. 2, 3. What plea can we have, since he hath shaken off his infirmities, ascended to heaven in his majesty, hath propagated his gospel, and hath been honoured, one time or other, in every part of the then known world ? They were under a law of riddles, could not well tell the meaning of the types that represented him ; nor were the things the prophets spake clear to themselves, 1 Peter 1, 10, 11, much less to the people. The curtains now are opened, the veil removed, the dusky cloud hath ended in a clear day ; yet the ancient Israelites and patriarchs had many of them so much faith as will render our unbelief without any ground of apology. If those that lived under shadows and the star-light of ceremonies had so much sight, and so much faith, as is reckoned, Heb. xi., and proposed to us for an example and encouragement to run our race, and 'lay aside that sin of unbelief, which doth so easily beset us,' Heb. xii. 1, what plea can we have for our unbelief, since the Sun of righteousness hath scattered the shadows of the night, cleared up the face of the heavens, accomplished what they believed and wished for, destroyed him that had the power of death, rooted up the foundation of the devil's empire, and 'brought life and immortality to light through the gospel' ? 2 Tim. i. 10. Their faith under shadows will render our unbelief under substance inexcusable.

4. How great will be the misery of unbelievers ! The greatness of the misery will be proportionable to the greatness of the sin ; it is a sin both against the law and against the gospel. By the law, we are bound to believe God, and whatsoever revelation he makes ; we are bound to trust him, as he is a God of truth : by the gospel, we are bound to believe that Christ came into the world to lay down his life as a ransom. If the breach of the law makes us eternally miserable, the rejecting the gospel makes the wound the deeper, and the smart the sharper. No man refuseth the remedy, but he sharpens his wound. If the sins of men, who have no knowledge of the gospel, condemn, how much more shall the sins of those, who sin both against law and gospel, have a severer recompense of reward for neglecting salvation, and so great salvation ? Heb. ii. 2, 3, 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first was spoken by the Lord ?' Refusing the covenant of grace, he puts himself upon the trial by a covenant of works ; and what hope an exact law often transgressed can give a malefactor, is easy to imagine. Millions have perished by it, none can be secure in it : 'There remains no more sacrifice for sin,' if this be slighted, Heb. x. 26. They are not in so good a state as they had been if Christ had never died, but worse, for they have his blood to answer for, as well as sins against the natural and written law, and render themselves utterly unworthy of that grace they disparage. Because of this, the Jews were broken off ; the refusing this corner-stone was the cause their foundations were tore up, and

they hurled down, from being a people, to become the reproach of the world. Though God punished them for their sinful idolatries, yet he never rejected them till they rejected his Son, and then 'wrath came upon them to the uttermost,' 1 Thes. ii. 16; and our unbelief comes not short of theirs, but exceeds it. If we deny Christ, it is just he should deny us, Mat. x. 33. It is an equitable law to have the same measure meted to us that we mete to others. If unbelief oppose God, no wonder God will oppose and punish unbelief. No man can imagine but that God will be sensible of the wrong done to his bleeding Son, and our dying Redeemer. How can he be regardless of the contempt of his glorious nature, and let a final indignity to his majesty pass with impunity? An indictment will be brought against such by every abused attribute of God; all will condemn them, since all have been condemned by them; not one will appear as an advocate for them. Holiness must hate him that is filthy, and will not be otherwise; truth will be glorified in the execution of the gospel threatening, since the sinner would blemish it in not resting upon the promise, and observing the precept; justice will punish such as will not accept of the satisfaction appointed to be applied by faith; wisdom will frame a hell for them that despised the great masterpiece of it; power will be glorious in keeping them for ever under that punishment, and burning up the stubble that would rise up against it. As there is a power to save, so there is a 'glorious power' to destroy, 2 Thes. i. 9. When wisdom, holiness, justice, grace, truth, shall not be owned, in the glory of them, in Christ, they shall make themselves glorious upon him to the cost of the unbeliever; for God hath a sovereign right to the glory of his attributes; since the creature will not actively honour him, God will make him passively to glorify the perfections disparaged by him. The blood of Christ shed by this sin, in regard of an implicit approbation, cries with as loud a voice to God for vengeance as Abel's blood did against Cain, and to as good purpose, for he that heard the voice of the one, will not be deaf to the cry of the other. It speaks the language of mercy to him that receives it, and the roaring of justice to him that refuses it.

2. Use of exhortation.

Let us be sensible of the malignity in this sin. It being a sin against the gospel, we should be more sensible of it than of sins against the law. Those are transgressions against a rule; this a transgression against a rule and a remedy. There is more reason we should be sensible of this, than if we had shed the most innocent blood, ravished the chastest bed, or made an explicit compact or covenant with the devil; these are sins mankind generally frown at, and think such persons fit to be thrown out of the society of mankind. Yet behold here an evil worse than all those singly or jointly considered in themselves. These are against the sovereignty of God, but not as this, a trampling upon the blood of his Son, infinitely above the most innocent creature. Those against the authority of God, this against his commanding authority and his condescending grace; those against common sentiments of nature, this against special revelations of a rich goodness. A murderer slays a man, an unbeliever crucifies a God; a thief robs a man of worldly goods, an unbeliever strips a God of his greatest glory; an adulterer defiles the bed of his neighbour, an unbeliever defiles a soul which is courted to be the spouse of God. Besides, unbelief is the breeder and fomentor of such sins which are committed by any under the light of the gospel.

1. Believers ought to be sensible of it. True faith is always attended with a sense of unbelief, a weariness under it, a longing to be rid of it. The poor man in the Gospel owned his faith, and yet confessed his unbelief with tears in his eyes, Mark ix. 24. And are there not heaps of infidelity lie in our

breasts? Is not the power of God sometimes distrusted, his goodness unregarded? Is Christ valued according to his transcendent worth? Do we always relish the excellency of the gospel? Do we never value and love a creature almost at the same rate we do the Creator and Redeemer? Are we not often more forgetful of God than we are of ourselves? Is not the word and oath of God too little sometimes to prop up a tottering faith? Are we not often more confident of men than we are of Christ, and bestow more credit upon the promises of men than we do on the promises of God? Do we always pay as much respect to God as we do to ourselves, as we do to men that shall die? How often do we find Christ complaining of the littleness of his disciples' faith, and the slowness of their hearts to believe, which were the only Christian church then in the world? And are any of us yet got beyond the merit of such rebukes? Are there no scents of this sin in the most cleansed vessels? Have not the best here a partial unbelief? And can there be one grain of it in the heart, without a proportionable sinfulness of it? The least unbelief hath the sinful nature of unbelief, as well as the least grain of poison hath the nature of poison. So much as we want of a perfect faith, so much we strip God of the glory of his nature, blemish his truth, asperse his wisdom, slight his goodness, disgrace his sufficiency, snatch away his delight; so much as we want of a perfect faith, so much we pierce the Redeemer, null the work of his mediation, undervalue the price of redemption; so much we deny those choice affections which engaged him in the undertaking and were illustrious in the execution, so much we deny the excellency of his person and design, so much we grieve him, so much we dishonour him. If all this be clearly in a total unbelief, it is some degrees in a partial unbelief, and every act of it. And ought this to be suffered in the heart without sense, shame, confusion, and deep humiliations? Let us pour out our tears for it, as we have poured out our Saviour's blood by it. The fat of a sacrifice, which was a part without sense, was to be consumed by fire; so should we endeavour that our insensibleness should be wholly burned up by the Spirit.

2. Those that are yet in a state of unbelief ought much more to be sensible of it; that we may not deceive ourselves, and raise hopes contrary to the word, to bless ourselves when God curseth. Without a sense of this there is no meeting can be between Christ and us. It is as much a bar to any gracious work in our souls, as it was in the days of his flesh to many mighty works in his own country, Mat. xiii. 58. Every man that sits under the gospel is bound to believe the divine truths revealed therein; he is bound to believe his infection by original sin, and that the curses of the law are due to him; he is bound to believe that God hath sent his Son to be crucified for the sins of men that believe in him; that repentance and turning from sin is a necessary duty; he is bound to repent, forsake sin, and with a contrite heart cast himself upon Christ, expecting salvation from him, and resolving sincerely to observe his commands, renounce his own righteousness, and rely upon his power; and therefore ought to be sensible of this obligation, and of that which is contrary to it and keeps him from performing it. A sense of this sin will lead the way to a sense of all the rest; this once quelled, the others expire; the death of the mother viper is the destruction of the young litter.

(1.) Christ was most sensible of this sin in others; should not we, then, be sensible of it in ourselves? It was a great part of his sorrow that men refused him, and would not accept of him, and salvation by him, Luke xix. 42. It made him sigh more pathetically, and made him speak as if he were weary of all his pains: Luke ix. 41, 'O faithless generation, how

long shall I be with you ?' His anger was for the most part raised against this, and this only ; and still it must, upon the same account, be more painful to Christ than all the thorns which were upon his head, and wound him more deeply than the nails did his hands and feet. Should we not, then, write after our Master's copy ?

(2.) It is a sin easy to be slipped into by a believer. Man is born with jealousies of God, which cause a distance, and render our particular closing with him more difficult. Sin in the nature makes us suspect every approach of God to be for our hurt : Luke v. 8, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.' The best have not been free from unbelieving starts against God. David had a desperate reflection on God : 1 Sam. xxvii. 1, that he should 'one day perish by the hands of Saul.' Though God had assured him of the possession of the kingdom, and daily experiences of God's providence in his preservation under the pursuits and armies of Saul might have confirmed him, yet he feared that some of the stones flung at him might reach him, and make him incapable of the designed royalty. Asaph, too, in regard of his spiritual condition, questions the mercy and faithfulness of God : Ps. lxxvii. 3-8, 'Is his mercy clean gone for ever ; doth his promise fail for evermore ?' The interrogation is at least a questioning of it, because, ver. 10, he acknowledgeth it to be his infirmity, which he would not have entitled his subscription to the eternal mercy of God, and the truth of his promise. We should therefore be sensible of that unbelief which yet remains in our natures, that we may be preserved against the encroachments of it.

(3.) No man can labour for faith till he be affected with the sinfulness of unbelief. The sense of this is the first step to faith. We cannot have a sight of the amiableness of a moral virtue, till we are sensible of the deformity of the vice which stands in opposition to it. A conviction of the sinfulness and misery of unbelief will make us endeavour after the grace and happiness of faith.

(4.) Nor can any reformation secure us while we remain insensible of the evil of this. Conviction of other sins leaveth a man in his natural state as it found him. All men that are not sensible of this, though convinced of all their other guilt, are in a state of sin. It is the work of the Spirit to convince men of it if they do not believe. Reformation takes away the ill savour of our lives, which made us stink above ground ; yet the life may be reformed, and the state not changed, but be as deplorable as before. Though atheism and profaneness may be left, yet a man by that is no more a member of Christ, and of the family of God, without faith, than he was when he was besmeared with his grossest vices ; no more than the moral Jews were, to whom Christ denounceth a dying in their sins because of their unbelief, John viii. 21. The guilt of all former sins cleaves to the soul under a new life, till upon faith in the blood of Christ it be wiped off. We are still in God's debt-book, without one farthing of our score crossed out ; for God must have his satisfaction, either from Christ or ourselves. He hath none from Christ for us while we remain in unbelief ; it is not applied to us or pleaded for us ; no remedy for this disease but in the blood of Christ, and no way of having that blood sprinkled upon us but by faith. Reformations garnish our lives, but the soul remains still unsanctified if unbelief reigns. That clears the outward rubbish, but doth not cleanse the inward sink. No true sanctification without Christ ; for 'in him we are sanctified,' 1 Cor. i. 2. Faith only is the band that unites us to him, whereby we get cleansing virtue from him. As faith only engrafts us into Christ, so unbelief alone keeps us off from that bottom ; as by this engrafting our actions become good, so

without it our best actions are bad. An ignorant heathen may as well please God as a painted unbeliever, Heb. xi. 6; this sin makes us utterly incapable to please God. The world is apt to lie under this error; because they have amiable qualities in the eye of man, they think they have no spot in the eye of God; but, alas! this doth render us more deformed in the eye of God, than all outward reformatations can render us beautiful.

2. As we ought to be sensible of it, so we should watch against it. This is a lesson for believers. It is easy to distrust God; our own hearts have dealt treacherously with him, and therefore we think he will requite us in our own kind. Let us watch against the first motions of it, because the devil by them endeavours to draw us to it. As all good works spring from faith, so all evil works from a defect in it. If there be a disturbance in the heart, other members cannot well do their office. Habitual faith lays the first stone of a heart sanctification—'their hearts purified by faith,' Acts xv. 9—and every act of faith raiseth it higher. So much of unbelief, so much of impurity; watch therefore against everything that may weaken the foundation of your sanctification. Unbelief only makes us sink under a temptation. Jacob wrestled with an angel, or with the Son of God; yet still kept up his faith in God's promise against the fear of his brother, and became a conqueror, Gen. xxxii. 24, &c.; Hosea xii. 4. Jacob's fight was a corporeal conflict,* because his thigh did shrink with his wrestling; but it was also a fight of faith. Why else should the angel so value a corporeal wrestling, as to give him a new name thereupon, and call him Israel, because he had prevailed with God? Besides, who can think a poor mortal could overcome an angel with an assumed body in a corporeal wrestling? It was an internal conflict of the spirit of Jacob with God, and the external wrestling was only a symbol of the inward contest. As he wrestled against a man by the strength of the body, so he wrestled against distrust by the strength of his spirit. For Jacob hearing of his brother Esau's march against him, and remembering his cruel threatening upon his forestalling the blessing, he was afraid of the ruin of himself and family, and consequently that the promised seed should be extinguished; and therefore wrestles with God upon the account of his promise, desiring him to defend his family from Esau's fury. Unbelief sinks us under devils, faith makes us wrestle with God. In case of any fall into sin, watch against this *master sin*.† Though our fall calls for sorrow, it calls not for unbelief. To throw off an humble faith, is to gratify the author of sin, the devil, by despair and unbelief, but doth not please him that wrought the redemption; this is to heap a mountain of sin upon the former. If a man sin, it is not said presently we have a devil to destroy, but an advocate with the Father, who is the propitiation for our sins, 1 John ii. 1. Watch therefore against every stirring of it upon all occasions; and the more since you have found how gracious Christ hath been, and that your former unbelief could not dispute away his grace, and send it back to heaven from whence it came. Let not a distrustful heart have more credit with you than a Saviour's promise. And that we may watch against it, let us think meanly of ourselves. He that esteems himself something, will quickly esteem Christ as nothing. Regard the things of the gospel as the most substantial things, of the greatest moment. Let the word dwell more richly in us than the notions of nature. Meditate often on it; rest not upon the knowledge we have by education, consider things in their reasons, not by interest or affection, without Scripture reason; work such arguments upon the mind as may strengthen the assent to the word; weak consents of will spring from imperfect assents in the understanding.

* Zanch. in Hos. xii. 4, p. 185.

† Tho. Goodw. MSS.

The deeper truths are in our understandings by an explicit, and formal, and renewed assent, the warmer and stronger will they be in our affections and will; every wind or violent storm will blow down a house that is weak in its foundation. There is an 'assurance of understanding' precedes the 'acknowledgment of the mystery of the gospel,' Col. ii. 2. The fuller the assurance of understanding, the closer the affiance of the will; a floating cork cannot be stable. Be well acquainted with the nature, terms, and riches of the covenant of grace, the mediation of Christ, his offices, the ends and fruits of his death. This is the way to watch against unbelief, so great a sin. This is necessary. As Christ will do no more miracles without faith, so the devil can do no mischief without unbelief. The more of faith, the closer our union, and the fuller our communications.

3. Let such as are in a state of unbelief endeavour to come out of it. We shall then lay by the most offensive sin, the object of God's greatest hatred, the dishonour of his attributes, the main prop of the devil's empire. We shall not till then please him; nor will he sheathe his sword, nor open his bowels. We then approve of the counsel of God, who is as tender of the honour of his Son as of his own; for he will have 'all men honour the Son as they honour the Father,' John v. 23. It will be the best return we can make to Heaven for the message of joy heaven hath sent to us in the gospel. The success of the gospel in the heart doth cheer the heart of Christ in his exaltation, as well as the news of it did in his humiliation: Luke x. 21, 'he rejoiced in spirit.' This is the way to add another throne for him to sit upon (as every believing heart is), instead of pulling him from what he had. None but an unbeliever is despised by God; no man but an unbeliever shall ever taste of his fury. Hath not God often by his Spirit entreated us to consider what is for our peace? Hath he not met us, and instead of offering to kill us, as the Lord did to Moses, he hath opened his heart, shewed us the wounds of his Son, desired nothing of us but that we would believe he had a design of kindness for us, and that we would give him such an entertainment as his affection doth deserve; that we would give credit to his assertion, and walk according to it? He complains only of your drawing back from him; he never quarrels with any man for sucking the breasts of his goodness; his only grief is, that you will not come, that you might have life. And can the spurning his grace be a means to our blessedness, or this desperate sin instate us in the glory of heaven? Shall the lions be ashamed to tear Daniel, and an unbeliever not ashamed spiritually to tear his Redeemer? Shall the ox know his owner, and man not know his crucified Saviour? Shall the stones rend in pieces at his death, and our hearts stand unshaken at his sufferings for us? Doth not God denounce a woe to them that remember not the afflictions of Joseph? Can any less be expected by those that increase the afflictions of Christ, and kick against the greatest design God had to honour himself? Doth not our nature gasp for a felicity? Is it not the sole inquiry of man, 'Who will shew us any good?' And when the gospel presents us with the most satisfactory blessedness, shall we resist it, and shut our eyes against the light that would conduct us to bliss? If we will dishonour God by unbelief, we shall vilify our hopes; were the gospel of no concernment to us, yet unbelief in regard of the Author of it were a sin worthy of the sharpest reproof. A belief of him we owe to him as creatures; but when it is of the greatest moment to our souls to believe the gospel, as that whereupon depends eternal happiness or misery, shall any of us that acknowledge it to be of God, that hath been bred up in the midst of its light, be so cruel to our souls as to make light of the conditions of it? It is unreasonable, as it dishonours our Creator, for whose glory

we were made; as it disgraceth our Redeemer, by whose blood we are ransomed; uncharitable to ourselves, by murdering our souls, to which we owe the greatest care. Or dare any persist in this way, and venture heaven and blessedness upon a conceit that the gospel is not true? What hurt can there be in believing it? An eternal mischief may be in refusing it. There is no dishonour to God by believing it; we own one God by acknowledging it; we own whatsoever is comely and praiseworthy, by the rational sentiments of mankind, in regard of the precepts. By casting it behind our backs, we hazard ourselves if it may be true; we destroy ourselves if it be absolutely true. A resolution to persist in unbelief is such that no man in his wits would ever think of.

4. Let such as are got out of the sink of this sin, bless God and prize their faith. God only dispersed that cloud of darkness which seized upon you, and drew you out of that mire, hateful to Heaven, wherein your hearts were soaked. What a gulf hath God delivered you from! He might have left you in that state, so reproachful to himself and so dreadful to you. Prize your faith above all your treasures; above all keeping, preserve and strengthen it. Before you could not but displease him, now you may be a pleasure to him; before you warred with every perfection of his nature, now you join issue with him in the exalting of them. By this you are interested in the fruit of his glorious counsels, the blood and mediation of his Son, the glory of his attributes. By this he snatcheth you from a league with hell, sets you above the head of the captain of unbelievers, knits your hearts to himself, and fits you to be monuments of his grace, to be placed with him for ever in heaven.

A DISCOURSE OF THE MISERY OF UNBELIEVERS.

He that believes on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.—JOHN III. 36.

THESE words are a part of the discourse of John Baptist to his disciples, which contains a summary of the gospel, and treats of the dignity of Christ's person. The occasion of the discourse is a question stated between the disciples of John Baptist and the Jews about purification: ver. 25, 'There arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying;' what the question was is not fully and plainly recorded. Some think the ceremonial purifications appointed in the Mosaic law were the subject of the contest. But the next verse (ver. 26) intimates the question to be concerning the baptism of Christ and John Baptist, which of them was the most efficacious for purification. Some preferred John's baptism in regard of his priority of time, he being first sent to baptize, and in regard of Christ's receiving baptism from his hands; the other might assert the baptism of Christ to be as purifying as the other, because of the many miracles wrought by him to confirm his mission, which seeing the Baptist wanted (for he wrought no miracles, John x. 41), John's disciples being jealous of their Master's glory, and troubled at the lessening his authority, in the heat of their contest address themselves to John to be an arbitrator in this affair, as being best able to judge of that for which he was commissioned: ver. 26, 'And they came unto John and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.' The contest, it seems, had engendered in their hearts an envy against Christ, because of the multitude of his followers above what their master had, who, they saw, was decreasing upon the other's rising, as the light of the stars is obscured by the appearance of the sun. They frame their relation to John with a contempt of Christ and a charge against him, as if they intended to incense their master against our Saviour. The contempt is in the title they give him. When they speak of their master, it is *Rabbi*; when they speak of Christ, it is *he that was with thee beyond Jordan*, not vouchsafing to name him. How apt is man by nature to have low and mean thoughts of Christ in his heart! The charge here is double:

1. Usurpation. *He baptizeth, he invades thy office, and takes upon him that function which belongs properly to thee, and after he seemed to enter himself thy disciple, by receiving baptism at thy hands, now is ambitious of an equal authority with thee, without a call or any order from thee, and baptizeth in his own name.*

2. Ingratitude. *He to whom thou barest witness, and by that eulogy gavest him an authority among the people who relied upon thy word. Now he endeavours to obscure thy glory, and hath forgot the obligation he had to thee by giving him so worthy a character. They thought John's commendation of Christ arose from his humility, and not from a knowledge of the excellency of his person. And they urge it with the success of Christ, 'all men come to him.' He makes so great a progress that he will draw from thee all thy disciples, and diminish that honour thou hast gained among the people. By this means they endeavoured to inflame the Baptist against our Saviour, and cause him to change his note, and give such a character of him as might lessen his growing reputation; but they found their expectation defeated by the modest answer John returns to them.*

Observe,

1. How do pride and passion often sway in the hearts of professors! The Baptist's disciples fear any disgrace of their master should redound upon themselves, and therefore endeavour to embroil him in contention. The disciples of Christ were not free from the like taint, when they were angry with one man's casting out devils, because he did not follow them, Luke ix. 49. John by his humility rejoices at the appearance of Christ, ver. 29; but his disciples' pride robs God of his present praise for sending the Messiah. We can never value any mercy of God while we value ourselves too much. What need have we to lay shackles upon the pride of nature, to watch over our passions, and restrain them within due bounds, that they may be serviceable to God and not to Satan! Grace must be upon its guard against the designs of the old Adam in us. The devil directed strong engines against the Baptist in the hands of his disciples, enough to batter him, without abundance of grace and an awakened exercise of it.

2. How often have pride and envy been the springs of the church's calamities! These two have been the incendiaries of the church as well as of the world. Pride in Adam overturned the worship of God in the world just after the creation, and envy in Cain made the first division after the promise, which led him to murder the holiest man, and afterwards drove him out from the presence of God. How little did those poor disciples think that in this they imitated the fallen angel! He envied God a service from man, and those envy Christ a glory from the creatures. How far will envy proceed if God do not stop it! Envy in Cain at the appearance of his brother's sacrifice first broached his brother's blood.

3. How forward are men to be drawn from Christ by an admiration of the gifts and graces of the saints!* They admire here the servant above the master. How long hath it been that the value set upon the saints thrust almost out any estimations of the mediation of Christ? Prayers to the virgin are become more numerous than supplications to the Son of God.

4. How dangerous is contention about ungrounded opinions! Had not John interposed, with what animosity against Christ had his disciples' hearts been filled upon this contest! The weeds would have grown strong, and taken deeper rooting, without a spiritual prevention. What is John's answer to this report? Religious, humble, and modest: ver. 27, 'John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.' He

* Chemnitius.

is not inflamed with any pride and passion, but ascribes to God the glory of his sovereignty, and to Christ the dignity of his person. The words of John may be formed into this argument : * Every one is to be honoured in the place wherein God hath set him ; God hath placed him you complain of in the highest dignity ; you are therefore to count him for your Lord, and me for his servant. Do not think that that person you charge doth invade this office without a call ; he could not have this success without the singular providence of God ; you must regard the author and original ; things are not in our own dispositions ; whatsoever blessing is received, is dispensed by a sovereign authority. Do not think, therefore, that I will arrogate that honour to myself, which God never assigned me.

Observe,

1. God is the sovereign author of all good to men : James i. 17, ' Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights.' All comes originally from him, whatsoever the channels of conveyance are, as rivers from the sea, whatsoever veins of earth they are strained through ; all our springs are in God. Rest not, then, upon anything below, though it be never so choice a mercy ; it is from above. Dart your eyes upward to the spring ; what is not the source of our blessings, should not be the prop of our souls. Trust in other things hath a quite contrary effect to trust in God ; the more we trust other things, the sooner we lose them ; the more we trust God, the fuller we enjoy him. God will strip us of the comfort we take in them, when we strip him of the glory due to him. Praise God alone for any mercy ; it is not fit the creature should run away with the praise of that which we enjoy at the cost of heaven. What stock could any have, if God had not set them up ? Fear not man ; whatsoever is from above shall prosper. If God gives the gospel, man cannot stop the progress of it. Heaven is able to maintain its own grants. It wants no more a power to preserve it, than goodness to bestow it.

2. The suggestions of Satan, and our own corrupt hearts to pride and envy, are to be bridled by the consideration of the sovereign disposal of God. This is the intent of the Baptist's answer. How loose and shaking would those lusts be in our hearts, if we were practically settled in this truth, that all dispensations are the fruit of the divine sovereignty ! In envying man, we envy God the disposal of his own gifts ; we invade his propriety, as if we had been God's partners in his own possession ; we would bring God down to our humours, and make our fancies the rule of divine actions. We entrench upon his wisdom, as though he were not wise enough to dispose of his own goods ; as though he should have asked our counsel, before he made a distribution of what is solely his own. It is a presumption to prescribe laws to our lawgiver. It is contrary to his goodness, as if we would tie the hands of his universal goodness, that it should run only into our cisterns. The consideration of the sovereignty and wisdom of God, would hinder us from being envenomed by this fiery dart.

3. Every man ought to be content in the place where God has set him. The will of our sovereign ought to be our rule ; we are not our own carvers ; let us rather bless God for what we have, than murmur that we have no more ; since all are his gifts, he can better choose for us, than we for ourselves.

4. How doth the wise God defeat the devil, and extract the greatest good from his worst intentions, and the sins of men ! The devil, by God's conduct, doth us good against his will. His tempting those disciples is the

occasion of this excellent summary of the gospel, which we might have wanted had the devil restrained his temptation. The passions of those disciples are the occasion to produce the fullest testimony out of the mouth of John, of the dignity of Christ's person, the truth of his commission, fitness for his work, the necessity of address to him, the means of enjoying the benefits purchased by him. Thus the devil tempted Christ to conquer him, and God ordered it for fitting of our Saviour to relieve us with more compassion, from an experimental sense of his subtilty and our misery. Joseph's slavery in Egypt by his brothers' sin is the preservation of the church in Canaan; and the crucifying the Son of God, the redemption of the world. Why should we distrust God, who can use the sins of men to clear up the way of salvation, both to ourselves and others?

After this introduction, the Baptist more particularly instructs them: ver. 28, 'Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him,' and opposes to their ambitious emulation his former testimony of Christ, and the doctrine they had heard from him, acknowledging him the Messiah, and himself but the herald or harbinger to prepare the way before him. I have often told you, as well as others, that I am not the Christ, intimating thereby that he it was whose glory was to outshine that of all the former prophets, since he was the grand prophet promised to the church. He retorts upon them their accusation of the ingratitude of Christ to him: Since I have given him such a testimony, as you well remember, that I did but baptize with water, but one coming after me was to baptize with the Holy Ghost; it is he you complain of is the person I meant; it is he to whom God hath given the Spirit not by measure; it is he that is the Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world; you cannot think I should be so foolish, as to deny my words. If you had respect for me, and good will to yourselves, you would have believed me and believed in him, since it is necessary for you so to do.

Observe,

How hard a matter is it to change the false opinions we have erected? These disciples had entertained a notion that their master was the Messiah; they dreamt of an earthly advancement by him, though he had made declarations to them, and in their hearing, to a committee sent from the Sanhedrim, that he was not the Christ, John i. 19, 20, yet that sentiment stuck in their heads. Pride makes men foster opinions against the glory of God, when they seem to conduce to their own interest; we are loath to submit our reasons to the wisdom of God. Man is a creature naturally apt to hold fast anything but divine truth. Bran will remain in the sieve, when the finest flour will drop through. The disciples of Christ would not part with the sweet thoughts of an earthly grandeur under their Master, though he had so often given notices of his violent death. Let us examine everything well by the word, before we lodge it as a notion in our heads, and measure every proposal by the respect it bears to the glory of God, as well as to our own advantage.

He proceeds further to shew the difference between Christ and himself: ver. 29, 'He that hath the bride is the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom, which stands and hears him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice; this my joy therefore is fulfilled;' as much as there was between a bridegroom, for whom the spouse is adorned and prepared, and a friend which served him in that occasion, who rejoiceth that he hath contributed to the satisfaction of his friend. I have prepared the people as a spouse for him; it is to him therefore they are to have recourse, him they are to love and honour; and it is my joy that I have rendered him any

service, according to the commission I received from heaven :* intimating thereby, that they should follow his example, and be so far from envying the glory of Christ, which they imagined to be the obscurity of his, that they should rejoice, as he did, in hearing the bridegroom's voice. Some understand it of the marriage between the divine and the human nature of Christ ; the divine being the bridegroom, the human the bride, which the divine nature assumed into union with itself. Most understand it of the marriage of Christ with the church, which was promised.

Observe,

1. Some evidence of the deity of Christ. He is the bridegroom that espouseth the church to himself. A thing promised by God to be done only by himself, Hosea ii. 16, xix. 20 ; it is Jehovah, the Lord, saith, ' I will betroth thee unto me for ever,' Jer. iii. 14. The Scripture often compares the union of the church with God to that of a marriage, and never gives the name and quality of the spouse of the church, to any but the true God. †

2. The end of Christ's coming into the world. To form a church, to make a spiritual marriage between himself and the souls of men. The church was not fit for his embraces, being defiled, polluted, of a corrupt extraction ; but Christ takes flesh, makes himself a sacrifice for her, pours out his own blood to wash her, and render her fit to lie in his bosom, Eph. v. 25-27. What love is this, to bring filthy man into a perpetual band of love with him ! He bore our sins that defiled us, he is sensible of our afflictions that trouble us, he communicates his goods to enrich us, he took our nature that he might communicate his own, he is become one nature with us, that we might become one spirit with him. Never did loving husband do so much for his spouse as Christ for his church. How should we love, honour, serve, and adhere to so good a Saviour, and pay him that reverence and faith which is due to him !

3. Ministers are and ought to be the servants of Christ, to woo for him, to persuade men to be espoused to him, by declaring their misery without him, their happiness with him, his willingness to entertain them. They are instruments to bring them to Christ, and after they are brought, to persuade them to keep the conjugal covenant with Christ. This ought to be our highest desire, and our chiefest joy ; ' This my joy is fulfilled,' saith John, since I have now attained the end of my embassy.

He then comes to make this conclusion, quite contrary to the intention of his disciples, and resolves to exercise his humility where they would have excited his pride : ver. 30, ' He must increase, but I must decrease.' He must grow up in authority ; the opinion that I am the Messiah must fall, that he may be owned to be the only person of God's designation. The person of Christ could not receive an increase, being infinitely great and glorious. Nor was there any diminution of the dignity of the Baptist, who lost nothing, but gained much by the appearance of our Saviour ; his glory increased with his humility, and his honour of being the forerunner of Christ remained, though his office expired ; but the increase and diminution was in regard of the exercise of their offices, the moon is to rule the night, and the sun the day, and in the opinion of the people, who ran after John as the Messiah, who must learn that the honour of that office only belonged to Jesus. ‡ John decreased, as the stars may be said to do when they are obscured by the sun ; not that their native light is taken away from them by the presence of the sun, and they lighted up again as a candle when the sun sets ; but because men need not the light and direction of the stars in the

* Amyraut. in loc.

† Daillé in loc.

‡ Daillé in loc. p. 450.

midst of the sunbeams.* Christ then increaseth in our hearts, when our knowledge of him, affection to him, and valuations of his person, rise to a taller stature in our spirits.

Observe,

1. All the glory, greatness, and righteousness of men, ought to veil to the glory and honour of Christ. We should become nothing for Christ's honour, as Christ became a worm for our benefit. The Baptist was willing to be obscured, that Christ might fill the world with a spiritual and divine glory. It is observable, that a little after this John was cast into prison by the providence of God, when his authority did clash with the authority and glory of Christ in the esteem of the people; that the Baptist's disciples, being deprived of their master, might fly to the Messiah, whose messenger their master was. It is a comfort in the afflictions of God's servants, that they make to the glory of Christ, as well as the benefit of their souls. What Herod and Herodias did, out of enmity to John, God ordered for increasing the authority and glory of the Messiah. Let us never value anything as a comfort that is a rival with our Saviour.

The reasons why he must increase he delivers from ver. 31, all which he lays down also as grounds of faith to build that conclusion on, which he makes in the text, and contains the marrow of the gospel.

1. In regard of the difference of their originals, ver. 31.

2. In regard of the manner of the communications of their doctrine, ver. 32.

3. In regard of the authority of his mission, ver. 34.

4. In regard of his excellent fitness, ver. 34, 35.

5. In regard of the special relation between the Father and the Son, and the special affection of the Father to him, ver. 35.

6. In regard of the full power given him over all things.

1. In regard of the difference of their originals: ver. 31, 'He that comes from above, is above all; he that speaks of the earth is earthly, and speaks of the earth.' He is from above, heavenly in his original; I am of the earth, earthy, born according to the law of Adam, by natural generation. What I speak, therefore, is mean in comparison of the declarations which shall be made by one of so illustrious a descent.† As his original is from above, so his authority is above all; but I am merely of a human descent, and have nothing in my nature but what is common to mankind. I have made no other revelations than what other men have made by the influence of God upon them; but he of whom I speak is above all, in the dignity of his person, the excellency of his office, the height and clearness of his knowledge, the purity of his graces, the extent of his authority. It is fit, therefore, that I should *decrease*, that he should *increase*. Earthly things are to give place to heavenly; his being from above notes his divine original, as the other's being of the earth notes his earthly original. It is not said, he *was* above, but *is* above all. He lost nothing of the rights of his dignity, by assuming our humanity; he was above all in reality, though a worm in appearance.

Observe,

1. The Deity of Christ is asserted, in regard of his original, 'he comes from above;' in regard of his dignity, 'he is above all;' in regard of his original, he is opposed to all men, who are from the earth in regard of generation. He was first in heaven before he was upon the earth; he could not come from above, if he were not first above. It is not therefore meant of his miraculous conception only, made by the power of heaven,‡ and not from any earthly cause; because the flesh of Christ was never in heaven when

* Illyric.

† Amyraut. in loc.

‡ Dailé, in loc. pp. 453, 454.

it was conceived by the Holy Ghost in the virgin's womb; nor till after his resurrection, when he ascended in his human nature far above the heavens. Though Adam was formed immediately by the hand of God, yet it was never said that Adam descended from heaven. But he is called *earthly*: 1 Cor. xv. 47, 'The first man is of the earth earthly, the second man is the Lord from heaven.' If there had been nothing heavenly in Christ but his conception, he might be called earthly as well as Adam. Nor can it be meant only in regard of his gifts; for the gifts of John Baptist and all the prophets were from above, from the Father of lights; yet he calls himself earthly, he distinguisheth himself as he was by nature from what he was by grace. John was from heaven in regard of his office, from earth in regard of his original; but Christ was from heaven in regard of original as well as office. He comes from above, not by a change of place, for his divine nature fills all things, but in regard of manifestation, discovering his divinity, which before was manifest only in the heavens, as God is said to descend from heaven, when he manifests himself in ways either of signal mercy or justice. In regard of his dignity, he is above all, above all creatures,* and therefore God. None but God can be above all, and have the title of supremacy; as much above all angels and men, as the heaven, from whence he came, is above the earth, to which he descended, for the manifestation of himself in our flesh; it could not be said of any angel, that he was above all. If, therefore, Christ be above all, we must pay that reverence and veneration to him, that is due to his deity and infinite superiority. He that is above all must have our affections and our services above all things, according to the excellency of his person, and dignity of his office.

2. The highest saints must be sensible of original corruption. The being of the earth is not only meant by John of his human condition, but his corrupted condition, as he descended in a way of ordinary generation from Adam. Behold, here is one greater than the prophets, Mat. xi. 11, the immediate harbinger of the Redeemer of the world, honoured with an employment above any that went before him, to prepare the way before the Messiah; a burning and a shining lamp, one sanctified in the womb, rejoicing at the approach of a Saviour before he saw the light; acknowledging the depravation of his nature, as he was the son of Adam, humbling himself under the consideration of it. Was there ever any elevated soul but complained of it? David, in the Old Testament, of his being 'shapen in iniquity,' Ps. li. 5; Paul, in the New, groaning under his 'body of death.' Were this more in our thoughts, pride would not be so flush in our hearts and actions.

John expresseth here his humility, by considering himself as earthly, which includes the miseries that follow an earthly extraction, viz. corruption, blindness, rebellion against God.† He doth not assert his baptism, and the doctrine he preached, to be earthly. They were from heaven, and our Saviour gives that testimony of him; but he pronounceth what himself and all men are in and by themselves, not what they are by the gift and grace of God.

3. Where is perfection to be found? When such a person as John, the greatest among those born of a woman, endued with such honour as to be the herald of the King of glory, confesseth himself earthly, and speaking of the earth, *i. e.* his words savouring and scenting of the corruption of his nature, shall men of a less stamp ever lay claim to that, which so humble and holy a person, one so characterized by Christ, could not challenge? If such a burning and shining light were not the possessor of a perfect state in

* Daillé, in loc. p. 455.

† Illyric. in loc.

this life, where is the man that is inferior to him in his other titles, that can count himself superior to him in this ?

4. The gospel and word of Christ is worth credit. It is not the word of a corrupted man, but of an heavenly offspring. Who shall we hear, if heaven can find no credit with us ? Are we fit to enjoy the happiness of the place, if we will not receive the precepts of it ? He is from above, he is above all, his words cannot be false while heaven is true.

Reason 2. The manner of the knowledge of Christ, or the communication of the doctrine to him: ver. 32, ' what he hath seen and heard, that he testifies.' John was inspired, but our Saviour had not only heard but seen what he testified ; and in this respect he is superior to all men. The prophets saw the things upon earth, Christ hath seen them in heaven. They saw them in streams, Christ in their fountain ; they saw the image of some things, but Christ hath seen the eternal models of all. He was in the bosom of the Father, and drew all that he knew from the depths of infinite wisdom. Yet, though the things he speaks are so plain and clear, few receive his testimony. So great a person, so fully understanding the mysteries of God, cannot find a reception among men ; very few believed in him, like the gleanings of a vintage after the gathering of the grapes.

Observe,

1. The fitness of Christ for his prophetic office. He hath seen things in the bosom of the Father, heard things from the mouth of the Father, he hath seen them, not by revelation, but as the Son of God ; was interested in the debates and results of the Trinity. He was ' by the Father when the foundations of the world were laid,' and the course of all things ordered, Prov. viii. 27-30 ; nothing is unknown to him that is known to the Father. As he only knows him, so he only hath ability to declare him. The things which Paul saw were unutterable ; he wanted ability as well as authority to declare them, 2 Cor. xii. 4. Christ hath both ; he hath seen and heard, and can and did testify what he saw and heard ; it was his Father's mind he should do so. How worthy is God of all our praise for his wisdom in appointing, and his love in sending, a person so fully accomplished, to make known his eternal counsels concerning the pardon of sin, and conferring eternal life on the lost sons of Adam ? How inexcusable doth it render the conditions of those that will not hear his voice, believe his word, since he witnesseth the things he hath seen and heard, in and from his Father !

2. From those words, *no man receives his testimony*, the paucity of believers is asserted ; few in comparison of those that receive him not. Let not the general unbelief of men discourage us from faith. It was foretold by the Baptist ; forewarned, forearmed. The devil is the god of this world ; he influenceth most men ; Christ is a mediator for those that are not of this world. All in the world enjoy some benefits of his mediation, but not the saving benefits of it. It is dangerous to go with a multitude. Let no man plead, such wise and learned men are of this or that opinion. If we follow the example of the most, we cannot be believers.

The Baptist makes a digression to describe the nature of faith, and the excellency of it: ver. 33, ' He that hath received his testimony,'—there is the nature of faith,—' hath set to his seal that God is true ;' there is the excellency of faith.

1. The nature of faith. It is a receiving the testimony of Christ in the certainty of it, and in the extent of it. The testimony of God's promises to encourage us, of his precepts to direct us, of his threatenings to awe us, and make us adhere faster to him : a resting in this testimony as certain, as the centre of our souls, the only foundation of our hopes. God is the ultimate

object of faith, Christ the immediate object of faith. Christ gives the testimony, God is the subject of that testimony. When the witness Christ gives of the things he hath seen and heard is received, to be rested in as the ground of our hope, and the rule of our walk, this is faith.

2. The excellency of faith. It owns the truth of God, 'he sets to his seal that God is true,'—a metaphor taken from contracts, to which men testify their approbation by fixing their seal. Thus we honour God, when we set to the seal of our faith to justify the truth of his word. No man that owns a God did ever absolutely doubt of his veracity; but the truth here meant is the fidelity of God in performing the promises of the gospel, in sending the Messiah. He owns God to be as good as his word, in sending a person every way complete for the office he had undertaken, to effect our redemption. God seals his covenant to us in the blood of his Son, and by sacraments; faith is a sealing the counterpart to God. We acknowledge his truth in what he hath done, and rely upon his truth in what he hath promised yet to do; and the hearty acknowledging his veracity in what he hath already performed, is the ground of our reliance on him in what is yet to be performed. If we believe not the first, we cannot rest upon him for the latter. We cannot honour God more than by owning his truth. The glory of it is the design of the whole Scripture, from the first promise to the close of the book. He that denies the manifestation of God's truth in his Son, either opinionatively or practically, denies the authority of the whole book, makes God as bad as the devil, accounts him a greater liar than any creature, 1 John v. 10. As faith gives God the greatest honour that a creature is capable to render, so unbelief fixeth the greater disgrace upon him.

3. In regard of the authority of his mission: ver. 34, 'he whom God hath sent, speaks the words of God.' He is sent of God, which is also an encouragement to faith in him. The prophets were sent of God but as servants, Christ as a Son. He came out from God, as a beam from the sun, the prophets came from God as matter kindled by a sunbeam. He was sent by God with an immense fulness of Spirit, the prophets were sent by God with some parcels of grace. The first act of faith is to believe that God hath sent him: John xvii. 21, 'That the world may believe that thou hast sent me.' He speaks the words of God, so did the prophets; Christ always speaks them, the prophets sometimes, as they were inspired according to the pleasure of God. Whatsoever Christ speaks, is the word and will of God. The prophets spake to the ear, Christ can speak with efficacy to the heart. He can give eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to understand; he speaks to the ear, and imprints upon the heart. He speaks the word of God with such an evidence and certainty of truth,* than which, if God himself should appear, there could not be greater.

4. In regard of his excellent fitness. Another motive to faith, 'for God gives not the Spirit by measure to him,' ver. 34. He hath the Spirit in the full source, the prophets in some little streams; he possesseth all the treasures of the Spirit, the prophets some grains and lesser parcels. This was the foundation of his fitness for the discharge of his prophetic office, as he was to speak the words of God, Isa. lxi. 1-3. The fulness of the Spirit he had not at the first bestowed upon him, in regard of the gifts of it (though he had the fulness of it for the sanctification of his human nature), but it was communicated to him proportionably to his age and private state, whence he is said to grow in wisdom, Luke ii. 52. But when he was to enter upon the discharge of his office, it was given without measure at the time of his baptism; and this inward donation of the Spirit of God to the person of

* Amyraut. in loc.

Christ, was shadowed by the appearance and descent of the likeness of a dove upon him, to which the Baptist might refer in this expression.

Observe,

1. Christ hath an abundant fitness from God for the discharge of his office, and an abundant fulness for his people. God did not measure to him a certain quantity of the gifts and graces of his Spirit, but poured it upon him without stint. Besides the fitness of Christ by virtue of the hypostatical union, whereby the divinity supported the humanity in the whole work, there was a fitness by the grace of unction, when he was 'anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows,' Heb. i. 9. The end of giving the Spirit in such a fulness, was to communicate to his people, that we might 'receive of his fulness,' John i. 16. It was given, not as a treasure to be preserved in a cabinet, but as a fountain to send forth fresh streams for a supply. Our Joseph hath the corn, not only for himself, but the supply of the people that come to him. And thus is Christ fitted to be an object of faith. He only is fit for this, that hath abundance of Spirit; a fitness to relieve us, a fulness to supply us; our faith were else in vain: no man would trust in a person, of whose ability, as well as sincerity, he were not assured. He is faithful in speaking the words of God, he is able in having the Spirit of God without limitation. And there is good reason it should be so, because there is a special tie between God and him, the relation of Father and Son.* He hath chosen us according to his pleasure, for the glory of his name; but he is the Son of God, and therefore the object of his unspeakable love. Hence is the 5th and 6th Reason, viz.

5. In regard to the special relation of God to him as Father, and his affection to him, ver. 35.

6. In regard to the full power given him over all things, ver. 35.

Observe,

1. God has a special love to Christ in his office of mediatorship. He loved him from eternity, as he was his Son by eternal generation; he loves him as mediator, by special constitution; he bears this love to him as mediator, as those words are understood, John xvii. 24, 'For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world;' and the words in this verse are meant of a love to him under this consideration. The gift of all things to him, and appointing him heir of all things, is a fruit of this affection to him, as undertaking the work of redemption. God loved him in his person; he loves him in his office; he is his beloved Son, as he is sent as a prophet to be heard and obeyed, Luke ix. 35. He loves him for undertaking our cause, for interposing for our peace. As he was the Son of God, he was *hæres natus*; as he is the Son of God in our nature, he is *hæres constitutus*, Heb. i. 2. He is the principal object of God's love; he loves none but in him, as he chose none but in him by his eternal decree, Eph. i. 4. Who can we then trust better than him who possesseth the love of the Father? We approve of the Father's affection to him, by bestowing our faith and love upon him. How highly do we please God, when our affections are pitched upon the same object with his, and run to the same term! If he loves the Son, he will love every one that loves him, and hate every one that contemns him. How comfortable is this love of the Father to Christ as mediator! He loves all for whom Christ doth exercise this office, all that believe in him; and his love is as unchangeable to the one as the other. Our security is founded upon the love of God to the Son, which is immutable, and consequently to all that are embraced in that office by him. God will

* Amyraut. in loc.

not repent of what he confers upon us, because he gives it for the love he bears his Son, which love redounds to his seed. As that love will never fail, so his grace and favour to a believer will never fail.

2. Christ is entrusted with all things necessary to our salvation. Some, therefore, interpret it, he hath given all things to man through his hand; he hath the possession, but for the believer's use. God hath given all things into his hand, all creatures to rule them, all treasures to bestow them, all power to protect his people; he hath given him the world of men and angels to govern, the world of his elect to redeem; he hath put all things under his feet, and 'made him the head over all things for the church,' Eph. i. 22. The consequence of the Baptist in the next verse, of believers having eternal life, would not be valid if he had this power only for himself, and not for their use. How comfortable is this! Things were given into the hands of Adam for his use and his posterity's; but he lost them, undid himself, and drew with him all that were in his loins. They are now given into the hands of Christ for our use, who cannot lose them; and therefore we cannot be lost if we believe in him. It is our happiness they are in his hands, and not in our own; in the hands of one who cannot lose them by sin, as Adam did, because of the permanent holiness of his nature, having the sanctifying graces of the Spirit without measure; nor by the craft and power of the devil, because of his infinite superiority above him, and having the enabling gifts of the Spirit without measure. His humanity was opposed, but not conquered; he hath an holiness infinitely distant from sin, and a wisdom to defeat the subtlety of the serpent.

We know also where to go for the alms we want. Christ is God's almoner to us, and our advocate to God; a mediator between God and us; he hath a commission to ask, and a promise to receive, Ps. ii. 8. We may be sure to receive if we believe. The unchangeable God will stand to whatsoever the Son doth; he will not diminish his love to his Son, nor deny his own grant to him. The gift given is without repentance in the Father, and the management of the trust without deceit in the Son. We have not what we want, because we go not to the officer God hath appointed for distribution; a treasure is deposited in his hand, but for want of faith we want the comfort. We dishonour the wisdom of God's choice, as well as the pleasure of his will, and deny the authority our Saviour is invested with, by neglecting him, and not believing in him. Oh wonderful goodness! to put our concerns into the sure hand of his Son, which were lost by the weak hands of Adam.

Upon all this discourse, John Baptist founds this conclusion, ver. 36. 'He that believes in the Son hath everlasting life; but he that believes not in the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.' Though all power be given to Christ, and he hath authority to dispense the treasures of God, whereof everlasting life is the chief, yet none can expect to enjoy it but upon the condition of believing on him. It is very reasonable that whosoever expects the blessing he is entrusted with, should assent and consent to God's choice of him and the conditions of enjoying them.

The text is made up of a motive to faith, and a dissuasive from unbelief.

1. The motive is drawn from the reward, *everlasting life*; spiritual life *de facto*, eternal life *de jure*; one in hand, and the other in hope, Rom. viii. 24.

2. The dissuasive from the misery, which is double.

1. Exclusion from life; shall not see or enjoy life, or shall not have so much as the least sense of it.

2. Permanency of wrath; the wrath of God abides on him.

Thus, after the description of Christ's person, dignity, and power, the

Baptist directs his disciples, who at first made the complaint of our Saviour, to a belief in him, by the most forcible arguments. He being so great as I have described, can give eternal life to his followers; and being so dear to God as he is, the wrath of his Father will remain upon his rejecters; and therefore, if the happiness of eternal life be desirable, and the terrors of divine wrath formidable, be sure that you receive his testimony, that you may acquire the one and escape the other.

He notes the special and immediate object of faith in both his conclusions: *believes on the Son*, and *believes not the Son*. Christ, as the Son of God, and sent by God, is the object of our faith.

The word translated *believes not*, is ἀπειθῶν, which some render, *he that obeys not*; the word properly signifies disobedient and obstinate, but in the Scripture it is often rendered as it is in the text, *unbelieving*, which is not without precedent in heathen authors.* It may well be rendered 'he that believes not,' because it is opposed to believing in the first part of the verse, and may be meant of final unbelief, where there is not a simple ἀπιστία, but an obstinacy and unpersuadableness against the gospel. It is not said, the wrath of God shall come upon him, but abides upon him. Either,

1. To shew man's misery by nature. Every man is born in a state of wrath, and remains under wrath, unless some expiation be made for his sin. Now, since there is no relief against this state but by the blood of the Son of God, which was shed for propitiation; if this be refused or neglected, the soul lies under that curse original corruption placed him in, and which he hath since frequently merited by an addition of many actual sins. The debt due to the law must be paid, either by believing in him who hath paid it, or by suffering it in our own persons; it is faith only makes us pass from that death our natural state hath subjected us to, unto that life which God hath provided in and by his Son: John v. 24, 'He that believes is passed from death to life.'

2. Or to distinguish it from the momentaneous wrath which sometimes lights upon a believer, which is called 'a little wrath,' Isa. liv. 8. There is a wrath which breathes upon a man like fire, which doth not destroy but refine; but this is a permanent wrath, which punisheth and preserveth the subject for ever under it. It is a wrath that will not pass away, whereby the eternity of punishment is at least implied; it shall never depart from him. In other expressions of God's anger, there may be a mixture of tastes of comforts; but here wrath encompasseth, and overflows like a sea of gall, without a taste of joy, or a touch of blessedness.

The doctrine I shall insist on is this: continued and final unbelief renders a man infallibly an object of the eternal wrath of God. The communication of the life of God was broken off by the sin of man, to which we are restored only by faith in the Redeemer; and without faith we are at a distance from God, the fountain of life, and remain under that wrath the state of nature put us into. As faith unites us to God, so unbelief separates us from God. Whatsoever righteousness there is in a man without faith in Christ, is vain and perishing; it is as stubble, or a paper wall, which cannot defend any man from the flaming sword of God's justice. It is of no efficacy of itself to eternal life; it may render the wrath and punishment less sharp than another's, but cannot remove it, and put a man into a state of life. It is not all kind of unbelief, or dissent from some particular truth, that subjects a man to eternal wrath; but unbelief that despiseth the Son of God, that refuseth to receive his testimony. It is by this men perish under the gospel, and not for want of declarations of divine goodness, or want of provision

* Stephanus Thesaur. cites Hesychius explaining ἀπειθῶν in Sophocles by ἀπιστος.

in Christ. Those that refused the invitation to the supper, so incensed the king, that he pronounceth an irrevocable sentence against every man of them, that they should not taste of the dainties he had provided, Luke xiv. 24. And our Saviour, in the direction to his apostles for preaching the gospel, orders them this theme: Mark xvi. 16, 'He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned,' as the immutable decree of God, concerning the state and condition of mankind, as to life or death. The latter follows upon the former; for if he that believes shall be saved, then the contrary to salvation will fall upon the unbeliever; and not only a bare privation of salvation and exclusion from the blessed vision of God, but a sharper sentence of misery, according to his ingratitude, in refusing the riches of divine grace, offered to him in the gospel.

I shall premise two things.

1. Unbelief is not the only sin that damns. Other sins will condemn as well as that. Adam's first disobedience was the ground of Adam's condemnation. Man was condemned by the law, before Christ was promised in the gospel. The world had come short of the glory of God, before Christ took the infirmities of our nature for suffering. He came to save, which supposeth man in a state of damnation; he came to redeem, which supposeth man in a state of captivity; he came to bring us to God, which supposeth our distance from God; he was incarnate to free us from the law, which supposeth our being under the curse of it.

2. Yet it is that sin, without which no other sin would damn a man that hath heard the gospel. If a man be found guilty of felony, for which the law allows him the mercy of the book, if he can read, he prevents the sentence of death; if he cannot, he sinks under the penalty of the law: his felony, and not his ignorance, is the meritorious cause of his execution. The case is much the same; men are condemned for other sins, which misery would have been prevented by faith; yet it differs in this, that unbelief is our sin; it is our duty to believe, since God hath authority to reveal his truth, and command us to acknowledge it; but the prisoner's not reading is his misery, not his crime. The sickness a man lies under would not have killed him * if he had taken the physic offered him; though the disease were mortal in itself, it might have been expelled by that sovereign remedy. The refusal of the medicine may be counted the formal or moral cause of his death, though the disease be the procuring or natural cause of it. A malefactor is cast into prison for treason; a pardon is offered and refused; had it been accepted, he had not undergone the penalty due to his crime. No sin could destroy us, if unbelief did not reign in us. Faith would instrumentally remove the guilt of all other sin. Upon the embracing the expiatory sacrifice of the gospel, our other debts would be cancelled; upon a refusal, our guilt stands upon record, and charged upon us in full vigour, and receives a greater aggravation, by the rejecting the most obliging revelation of God, and counting the remedy for sin in the merit and satisfaction of Christ a trifle. Other sins condemn *meritoriously*, and this *formally*, say some. Though all graces are in a believer, yet his salvation is principally ascribed to faith in the rank of grace: Eph. ii. 8, 'By grace you are saved, through faith.' So, though a man be guilty of all sins, yet his condemnation is attributed to his unbelief. The guilt of the most monstrous enormities would not be laid to any man's charge, if he did by faith and repentance turn to God; and the most glittering righteousness, with unbelief, will not prevent his being fuel for wrath. Who are excluded from the bosom of Abraham? The sons of the kingdom, bred up and nourished among the ordinances of

* Gerhard. harmon. cap. clxxix.

God, but neglecting or refusing a Saviour. And who are entertained there? Gentiles besmeared with the mire of idolatry, yet expiated by the mediator they believed in, Mat. viii. 11, 12; it is upon the occasion of the faith of the centurion, that Christ speaks of the happiness of the Gentiles and misery of the Jews. Men, strangers to God for so many ages, are engrafted by faith, and prepared for heaven, while those entrusted with the oracles of God are disinherited by unbelief, and made vessels of wrath. In regard of merit, every sin is the cause of condemnation; in regard of execution, unbelief is the sole cause. Shimei reviles David,* is pardoned by him, and his pardon renewed by Solomon, but with a condition that he should not go out of Jerusalem; he breaks this condition, is, according to Solomon's word, executed. The true cause of his death, is his reviling of David; had he not been guilty of that, Solomon had no ground of offence, nor had imposed any condition upon him. But when he violates that condition, and goes out of Jerusalem, against the command of the king, Solomon takes occasion to punish him for his former crime. Shimei might have avoided the punishment, by observing the condition commanded. Men are condemned by the law, and executed by the justice of it; the condemnation of the law would not take place, if faith, the cure of guilt, had possession of the heart. No sin can condemn, if faith be present; and no righteousness can save, if faith be absent. While unbelief remains, all sins are retained; when this is removed, all sins are remitted. All that perish, perish either *by* or *for* this not believing; those to whom the gospel is not revealed, perish by reason of their not believing, through ignorance; it is by reason of that the wrath of God abides on them; and when there is but one medicine to cure a disease, the ignorant patient perisheth for want of the knowledge of it; the knowing patient perisheth for want of applying it. This the schools understand,† when they say, the heathens that never heard of Christ perish *ratione infidelitatis*; those that hear of him perish *propter infidelitatem*, in a state of infidelity, though not for it.

For the evidence of this doctrine, let us consider some propositions.

1. All men by nature are under condemnation. The insensibleness of this, is the cause of unbelief; and without a due consideration of this, there can be no entertainment of the gospel. Christ himself preacheth this doctrine: John iii. 18, 'He that believes on me is not condemned, but he that believes not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.' He *is* condemned *already*, not *shall be*, but *is*, *i. e.* he is in a state of condemnation. The sentence is pronounced by the justice of God against every son of Adam. 'Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned,' and 'judgment came upon all men to condemnation,' Rom. v. 12, 18. All the branches of Adam were adjudged to eternal death by that law, which he, by his original apostasy, transgressed, and they, by their repeated offences, have further violated. All are the children of wrath, all are become guilty before God: 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them,' Gal. iii. 10. The whole race of mankind was bound up in that sentence pronounced against Adam upon transgressing the law, which God had enacted: Gen. ii. 17. 'Thou shalt die the death.' By the same act of justice which cast Adam out of paradise were all his posterity expelled. We are an accursed generation by the covenant of works; our hands and our heels are lifted up against our sovereign Lord; we are utterly naked of original righteousness; all the sins we have committed have every one damnation at the heel. We are exposed to the curses of the law, the fury

* Barlow on Tim. part. ii. p. 94.

† Vines, Supper, p. 362.

of God, the scoffs of the tempting serpent; there is but an inch between us and devouring flames; all are condemned, though all are not yet executed; God yet gives respite to man to lay hold upon his mercy in the gospel. If a man die without faith in the Son of God, he is as surely undone as if he were under the full execution of all the threatenings of the law at this instant. He is 'condemned already,' *i.e.* he hath the cause of condemnation in himself, the sharp points of the law are full against him; as a malefactor in the gaol for some capital crime may be said to be condemned already, in the nature of the offence he hath committed, by the equity of that law he hath violated. There is a double condemnation, one by the law, another by the gospel. All men are in nature condemned by the first, all unbelievers by both; they are condemned at the tribunal of the law for transgressing it, and even at the mercy-seat of the gospel for rejecting it. None are exempted from it but by faith in the gospel, which is the only way to escape the severity of the law. When a man appeals from the tribunal of the law, whereby he stands condemned, to the throne of grace, wherein mercy sways the sceptre dipped in the blood of Christ, casting himself upon the merit of that blood, and resolving to obey the voice of a Redeemer, he comes forth from his prison, and the darkness of condemnation, into the light of life. He is condemned already. Every elect person is thus in a state of condemnation, while he remains in a state of unbelief; for if there be 'no condemnation to them that are in Christ,' Rom. viii. 1, then there is nothing but condemnation to them that are yet out of Christ; and if a man depart out of the world in that state, he for ever lies under the irrevocable sentence of the law, for ever cursed, because for ever guilty. And the reason is rendered, 'because he believes not in the name of the only begotten Son of God.' He refuseth the only remedy God hath provided, and excludes himself from the life, salvation, righteousness, and happiness which Christ hath purchased, and therefore lies under the judgment of the old sentence by refusing the grace of the new administration, and acquires a new guilt; for the more excellent the person that is neglected, the only Son of God, the greater punishment is deserved. He further describes to us* that faith which brings us out of that natural condemnation; he doth not say, because he hath not believed that the only Son of God is come into the world, which is a faith that many rest upon,—this would exclude only absolute infidelity and dissent from the doctrine of the gospel,—but 'because he believes not in the name of the only begotten Son of God.' He receives not his word, relies not upon his office, submits not to his authority, for *name* signifies this and much more in Scripture. A man may believe the Son of God is come, yet place no confidence in him, nor pay any obedience to him. A man may believe such a man to be a physician, and able to cure, but if he useth not his medicine he shall be never the better for his skill.

2. Man being thus naturally condemned, his unbelief binds all his guilt upon him: John viii. 24, 'I say therefore unto you, that you shall die in your sins; for if you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins.' In the illative, *therefore*, he notes their natural condemnation, because they were 'of this world,' ver. 23. And there is no remedy to prevent this death, but to 'believe that I am he,' the Messiah, the person appointed to bruise the serpent's head, appointed to be the Saviour of the world. All sins are 'sealed up in a bag,' Job xiv. 17, recorded with a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond, Jer. xvii. 1. Every indictment remains in force; nothing but faith in the blood of Christ can cancel the writing, deface the seal, take the accusation off the file. Unbelief therefore locks all other sins

* Muscul. in loc.

like shackles upon the conscience,* which otherwise by the help of Christ might easily shake them off; all men's violations of the law stick to them, and the wrath due to them hangs over them. When a prince pardons all misdemeanours by his proclamation upon easy conditions, and swears that if there be not an acceptance of it the refuser shall answer the law for all his guilt; if a man will not sue out his pardon, will not perform so easy a condition, he continues the weight of all his former guilt upon him. The first promise was made after the fall, to take away the guilt of transgressions against the first covenant, Heb. ix. 15. If the promise be not received, the mediator applied, the guilt of those transgressions endures. We are condemned upon the breach of the first covenant, and can only be restored to a state of life by embracing the new. Sin remains in its vigour, as a disease upon a patient, by refusing the only physician able to cure it. It fastens guilt the more, because it is an approbation of all the iniquities committed against the law; and increaseth the guilt of those sins he was guilty of before, because he manifests a greater fondness of them, a stronger unwillingness to part with them. It leaves the unbeliever naked to the stroke of divine justice, without a refuge to cover him. He that refuseth shelter against a potent adversary exposeth himself to his fury. There is no pleading the covenant of works; that hath been transgressed, and proclaims only punishment, not pardon; nor the covenant of grace, the sanctuary of that he refused to enter into. So that he is not only, as a heathen, in the same condition as if Christ had never suffered, in regard of want of relief, but in a worse, in regard of sharpness of punishment; he hath not only no more title to happiness than if Christ had never died, but a stronger title to punishment because Christ did die. His sin remains in more vigour against him, because the only remedy is refused by him. The weight of guilt is not removed, and the hour of punishment is reserved for such an one.

3. The covenant of grace, in the hand of a mediator, is the last covenant that God will make. The times of the gospel are called 'the last times,' 'the last days,' Isa. ii. 2, Heb. i. 2; no other relieving administration is intended by God, or can be expected by us; this contains the whole and utmost counsel of God about the salvation of men, Acts xx. 27. An anathema is poured out against any that 'preach another gospel,' Gal. i. 9; 'No more sacrifice remains for sin,' Heb. x. 26, 27. There is but one sacrifice for expiation, but one mediator for intercession, but one special officer appointed by God under whose wing we can be safe. It is a covenant of infinite grace; there can be none above it, because there cannot be grace above infinite. There can be no refuge but in mercy; if mercy refuse, what can step in for our relief? Mercy is the only bar to justice; if the bar be removed, what stop to the overflowing surge? This covenant is settled, that no man shall enjoy the benefit of the satisfaction the surety hath made, without the conditions of repentance and faith. If this law stand of force, it cannot be supposed that there can be any salvation without a satisfaction for the breach of this covenant, as well as a satisfaction was necessary for the breach of the first; for the honour of God will as much or more require a satisfaction for the breach of this, as being a greater contempt of him, than for the breach of the first covenant, wherein the contempt of him was less, and so many attributes were not disparaged by it. This satisfaction must be by a stronger surety than ourselves; for ourselves we are as unable to return a recompence for the violations of the second covenant, as we were to do it for the first. So strong a surety we cannot have, unless the Son of God should be sent to suffer again, only upon this condition, that the sinner should be discharged without anything done on his

* Reynolds's Life of Christ, p. 496.

part. But as to the first, the sufferings of the Son of God must never be repeated; he was to bear sin but once, his second appearance is to be 'without sin unto salvation,' Heb. ix. 28, the salvation of believers, the damnation of unbelievers. No more sacrifice remains for any sin in the world. Nor, suppose Christ were sent to bear sin, and be again the chastisement of our peace after the violations of the second covenant, it cannot be upon such terms, that upon the account of his sufferings, without anything done on our parts, we should be discharged. It seems not congruous to the honour of God to send his Son to suffer again, or if he did, to impose no conditions upon those that should enjoy the benefit of those sufferings. There can be no less required than is now, which is no more than the receiving the atonement, Rom. v. 11, a consent to it, and acceptance of it. Nor is it consistent with the holiness of God to discharge men upon the suffering of a surety, who will persist in that sin for which the surety suffered, and make use of a Saviour to be free from suffering but not free from offending. No more is required now; in this consists faith and repentance; and no less can reasonably be thought to be required if Christ should again be exposed to suffering. What less can any prince, any man require, for any favour he doth, but acceptance and gratitude? So that though the transgression against the covenant of works is relieved by the covenant of grace, yet the transgressions against this can have no relief but in it. For it is the last, and if it were not, you cannot suppose any covenant to succeed upon lighter terms than the grace is offered in this. To suppose a covenant without conditions, is as much as to suppose man to be created without a rule of obedience; and this is to suppose God without an exercise of his sovereignty, and a creature without subjection, both which are impossible.

4. It is impossible, according to the economy of the gospel, that an unbeliever can be saved by mercy. A man must either be saved by justice or mercy: by justice he might in the first covenant, had he not provoked it; by mercy in the second covenant he may, if he doth not refuse it. Now, justice cannot save him in the first covenant, because he wants a righteousness of his own; mercy cannot in the second, because he will not accept the conditions of it, which is, the receiving the righteousness of another. Other sins offend justice, but this provokes mercy, which is the severest attribute when provoked, as the sweetest when received. It is not fit, indeed, that mercy should save an impenitent, unbelieving sinner, God having appointed a mediator, for the content of his mercy, as well as the satisfaction of his justice (that mercy might not complain for the severe destruction of mankind), and mercy fully acquiescing in the reasonableness of the conditions of faith and repentance proposed in the gospel. Justice and mercy having met together upon those articles, and struck hands in a full agreement, it is not fit mercy should entertain an unbelieving sinner, who refuseth the terms infinite mercy hath been satisfied with in the compact between itself and justice. If mercy should offer to embrace such a one, it would not be true to its own condition; as, if justice should not punish the transgressions of the law, it would not be true to the law, and consequently not true to itself, because it is the rule of the law. Mercy to such a one after this agreement would be an unequitable mercy. We must not fancy a weak and dishonourable mercy—a God unrighteous in his acts of compassion. Mercy cannot but be offended to see the conditions it gained in its suit, and which it was fully contented with, despised and trod underfoot. Mercy can no more save any that remains an object of revenging justice under the first covenant, than justice can condemn one that is an object of mercy by receiving the blood of the second. The attributes of God cannot invade one another's rights. It

is fit he should be left to the hands of justice, that will not stand to the terms and covenant mercy made for him.

(1.) This is not consistent with the truth of God. When God made the law, he annexed promises and threatenings, and his truth was bound to make them good upon the suitable behaviour of man; though we find only a threatening upon record, yet that implies a promise, Gen. ii. 17. If death be threatened upon transgression, life is implied upon obedience. But when man broke the law, truth was engaged on the side of justice, and had nothing to do in a legal way with mercy; for man, by his sin, had rendered himself fuel for justice, and had entailed upon himself the horror of the threatening. But in the work of redemption, mercy and truth, which sin had separated in regard of any joint acts towards man (asking truth to be a second to the justice of God), met together, Ps. lxxxv. 10. These attributes, which were severed, were joined again in an indissoluble knot—mercy to the sinner, and truth to the threatening. Mercy took man's part, and desired peace; justice took the law's part, and required punishment: neither mercy nor justice could lose their nature; sin had severed them, Christ re-unites them, and truth now is engaged on both sides. If an unbeliever, therefore, in that state thinks to be saved, mercy and truth must be severed; but this happy union cannot be dissolved for the sake of rebels against both. As the power of God, though infinite, is regulated by his will,* so the mercy of God, though infinite, is regulated by his truth: he hath made faith an unalterable condition of the covenant; and God cannot deny his covenant, because he cannot deny himself. The truth of God is engaged to damn such a man more than before; it is as well engaged to make good the evangelical threatening, as it was before to make good the legal. Justice will condemn both by law and gospel; it is reason that justice should satisfy itself upon that man, as far as he is able to give satisfaction, who will not be contented with that which infinite justice was satisfied with. Mercy will condemn him; that hath no reason to afford any relief to that man that despiseth the evangelical conditions, which fully pleased it, and re-united it with justice and truth. God hath confirmed those terms by an oath, that those that believe not 'shall not enter into his rest,' Heb. iii. 18. But he never took an oath that he that observed not the covenant of works† should not enter into his rest. Though Adam was under a covenant of works in his innocent state, yet he was not in such a state as to be under an utter impossibility of salvation upon the transgression of it, because God had provided a remedy in his Son. But he is now under an oath to punish every man that doth finally reject that remedy. The highest truth cannot deny one tittle of his word and oath.

(2.) Nor is it consistent with his wisdom. It is not agreeable to the wisdom of a prince to be reconciled to any rebels that will not suffer themselves to be reduced to their former obedience.

If God should change his dispensation, it must be because the terms are too hard, or the benefits not valuable enough. Neither of those can be; the conditions are most reasonable, the benefit the most precious, that God, in the conjecture of any creature, can give. It had been no act of wisdom to send his Son to satisfy his justice, if mercy should be so cheaply prostituted; if rebels could enjoy the favour while they cherished their rebellions; if the purchase should be given to those that dishonoured the purchaser, and salvation conferred upon those that contemned the Saviour. The wisdom of God would suffer, in undervaluing the meritorious blood of his Son, if he conferred the same favour upon those that despise it and those that esteem

* Bolton, Direct. for walking with God, p. 387.

† Hooker's Effectual Calling, p. 366.

it, and placed swine, that trample his jewels in the dirt, in the same happy condition with those that lodge them in their dearest affections. What ground of praise for that manifold wisdom, so much celebrated in Scripture, in the mission of Christ, if any could be admitted into heaven without faith in him and love to him? God would declare his death to be rather an act of cruelty to him than kindness to us, since, if any were saved without faith in him, it would be evident that his death was unnecessary, since we could be as happy without him as by him.

(3.) Nor is it consistent with the honour of Christ. The very end of Christ's death is crossed by unbelief. He suffered the punishment due to our sins, that sin might not reign in us, as well as that the punishment might not reign over us. What benefit can we reasonably expect by his death, if we will not believe in him and renounce our sin, which is contrary to the end of his death? God would act contrary to the end of our Saviour's death, in giving to the goats the benefits his Son purchased for the sheep, John x. 15; and bestowing upon his enemies what he designed for his friends, John xv. 13; and sprinkling that blood upon those that tread it under foot, which was shed for the gathering together the sons of God, John xi. 52; and imputing the merits of it to impure wretches, that was intended for the purifying a peculiar people unto himself, Tit. ii. 14. When Christ died only for believers, in regard of the actual communication and application, it is a disparagement unto him, and a making his death in vain, to let the despisers of it have an equal share in the benefits of it, and make it as much a savour of life to them that will not value it as to those that do. What king, that offers reconciliation to rebels, by the intercession of his son, demanding the conditions of trust in his son and obedience to him, promising them not only upon it the pardon of their crimes, but the investing them with new favours, would not dishonour his son, as well as himself, if he admitted any one person of that rebellious pack without that trust and obedience to him upon which the pardon was offered. Let us, then, appeal to our own consciences, and ask them the question, whether they think it comely and worthy of God to save any against his word, his oath, his threatenings, the intention of the death of Christ, against all those terms upon which he is proffered to man?

(4.) Justice cannot but punish an unbeliever. As goodness cannot but smile upon an innocent creature, mercy cannot but hold open its arms for a believing penitent, so justice cannot but flame out against an obstinate rebel. As goodness would not be goodness if it rejected an holy soul, mercy would contradict its own nature if it thrust back a penitent believer, the proper object of it, so justice would be injustice if it spared a final unbeliever. And, as the *first*, viz., to act contrary to his goodness, it is impossible in the nature of God; the *second*, viz., to act against his mercy, is impossible in the settled method of God; so the *third*, to act against his justice, is impossible in the nature of God, say some, with much probability; but certainly impossible according to the revealed will of God. As the holiness of God cannot but hate sin, so the justice of God cannot but punish it: it would be some degree of love to impurity wholly to spare it. That God spares a sinner for a time, is for the manifestation of his patience, but especially upon the account of the mediation of Christ; for, as by him the world was created, so, after sin, by his mediation it did consist; without this the world could not have stood under the curses of the law. But to spare an obstinate rebel for ever, would evidence an approbation of his sin, as well as an affection to his person. God, therefore, having manifested that he will have sin punished, in the sinner, or the surety, and that he will

not pardon it without satisfaction, the punishment of an unbelieving rebel will be as unavoidable, as the punishment of Christ after he had entered himself as our surety. Since God did not spare the Son that he loved, when he would stand in the stead of sinners, can he spare the unbeliever that he hates, when he slights the Son that he infinitely loves, and thereby dares the justice of God, which he hath seen lie so heavy upon the Son of his affection? Could any dispensation from suffering have been granted, his only Son, a spotless surety, should have enjoyed the benefit of it; but that could not be, in regard of his immutable justice, after he was accepted by him in that quality. Since it was necessary his only beloved Son should be exposed to sufferings for the remission of the sins of others, it is as necessary the final unbeliever should be exposed to dreadful punishments for his own transgressions, and the slighting so great a remedy. The justice of God is inflexible in the punishment of sin,* when the sinner remains obstinate and impenitent: the inflexibility is declared in the sufferings of Christ, which were necessary for remission. And though his sufferings, and the satisfaction thereby, were of infinite value, yet they are wholly useless for the eternal benefit of those that wrap up themselves in their infidelity and impenitence; faith and repentance being required as necessary conditions for the enjoyment of the fruit of these sufferings. When this mediation and satisfaction of Christ is wholly refused, or not embraced upon the terms on which it is offered, the only bar to the inundation of God's justice is taken away, whereby the soul lies naked to the overflowings of it.

(5.) That person which was the offered Saviour, shall be the judge and condemner of such as neglect the terms of salvation by him. What sanctuary can an unbeliever have, when the mediator of mercy appears as the infliker of punishment? 'He appears the second time to the salvation only of those that look for him,' Heb. ix. 28† (that affectionately look for his appearance), of those whose sins he bore upon the tree. Christ did never obtain any peace and pardon for those that persevere to the end in their infidelity. Such Christ is said not to know: Mat. vii. 23, 'I never knew you;' not to pray for: John xvii. 9, 'I pray not for the world,' *i. e.* for such as remain in their sin, and are separated from God by their unbelief. God hath promised to make all his enemies his footstool; and as he hath conferred upon him a power of asking for his people, so he hath given him a power of destroying his enemies, and committed all judgment to the Son: Ps. ii. 8, 9. 'Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron,' is the fruit of Christ's asking of God. As he gives him blessings for those that trust in him, ver. 12, so he gives him judgments for those that set themselves against him. God's mercy will not relieve any that are mortally wounded by his Son; and he that gives Christ the whole world upon asking, will not contradict him in his severest acts of dashing his enemies like a potter's vessel. As he had a love to shed his blood, so he hath a wrath to burn them that kiss him not with a kiss of homage. They are so far from having any share in his intercessions for mercy, that they have a dreadful interest in his pleas for wrath. He indeed prayed upon the cross for the forgiveness of some, he prays also for indignation to be poured out upon others, Ps. lxi. 23, 24. It is the cry of him to whom they gave gall for meat, and in his thirst, vinegar to drink, ver. 21. His blood hath a voice for the forgiveness of some, and for the punishment of others; it hath as loud a cry *against* them that undervalue it as it hath *for* them that do apply it. He cannot intercede for any but upon the account of his blood; his intercession is no other than the voice of his blood which

* Amyraut. sur Heb. vi. p. 108, 109, improved.

† ἀπεκδέχομένους, that affectionately look for him as one friend for another.

speaks in heaven. His blood will no more speak for them that slight it, than Abel's blood did for Cain that shed it. 'It speaks better things than the blood of Abel,' but only for those that are 'come to the Mediator of the new covenant and the blood of sprinkling,' Heb. xii. 24; nay, Christ is not able to save any but those that believe. 'He is able to save,' but with a restriction, 'those that come to God by him,' Heb. vii. 24, 25. Not able morally, as it is said, 'it is impossible to renew' apostates from the gospel 'to repentance,' Heb. vi. 4, 6. Not but that God can by his absolute power renew one that doth totally apostatise from the profession of the gospel, but in regard of his wisdom and righteousness it is impossible. So Christ is able to save none but those that come unto God by him. God hath put such a limitation in the covenant, agreed between himself and our Saviour; those only are to be justified that have the 'knowledge of his righteous servant,' Isa. liii. 11. He saves only his seed, those that are 'begotten to a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead.' He can save only those that are his members, and faith only gives us an union to Christ, and so entitles us to salvation. Christ can never run counter to his gospel, and bless them whom the gospel curseth, or save them whom the gospel condemns. This would be a contradiction, to confirm the covenant by his death, and break it by his life; to walk according to the counsel of God when he was in the flesh, and defeat it when he is upon his throne. He that gave mercies according to men's faith when he was upon earth, will not give salvation to unbelief since he is ascended into heaven. His usual language was, 'Be it unto you according to your faith,' 'Go in peace, thy faith hath saved thee.'

(6.) That which makes the sin against the Holy Ghost unpardonable in this world, makes final unbelief unpardonable in the other. A denial of Christ is joined with the sin against the Holy Ghost, Luke xii. 9, 10. Not that unbelief, and the sin against the Holy Ghost, are the same; for the one is pardonable in this life, and the other not. The sin against the Holy Ghost is, I suppose, accounting Christ an impostor, or a total apostasy from the doctrine of the gospel, after some approbations of it, and tastes of its sweetness in the understanding, Heb. vi. 4-6. But the final unbelief of those that sit under the doctrine of the gospel, puts them in the same state with the other: Mark iii. 28-30, 'He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.' 'All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men,' Mat. xii. 31, *i. e.* may be pardoned;* there is nothing in the economy of God to hinder it. The transgression against the law was a transgression properly against the Father, to whom the creation is ascribed, and who settled the law upon that occasion. Nothing in the wisdom of God repugns, but that the pardon of this kind of sin may be presented to men, and a Redeemer may be appointed to make a satisfaction to the Father for it, and the benefit of it may be enjoyed by men, upon their turning to God from whom they had revolted (and upon less conditions than this, no benefit could reasonably be expected by it, as was shewn before). As creation is ascribed to the Father, and consequently the law, so redemption is appropriated to the Son, and consequently the gospel. By his sufferings he paid the price, and by his resurrection he received the discharge, and an approbation of his sufferings, and of the conditions upon which the fruit of them was to be received by men. Unbelief is a sin properly and immediately against the Son; as Christ is the immediate object of faith, so he is the immediate object of unbelief. The sin against the Father is clearly more pardonable, according to this dispensation, than the

* Amyraut. sur Heb. vi. p. 114, &c.

sin against the Son; because here is a satisfaction made to the Father for the sins against the law. But though it be made and offered to men, yet they may give no respect to it, and by reason of the natural darkness of their minds not understand the high concern of it. But when the Spirit doth by a common work enlighten their minds, and make them in some measure see the comeliness, excellency, and necessity of the things the Redeemer hath done and suffered; if after this they prefer their trifling pleasures before him, and will finally deny him in opinion, profession, or practice, what help can be expected? The justice of God required satisfaction by blood for the breach of the law, because the law was, 'In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die the death.' The Son therefore relieves men by his death for transgressions committed against the Father. The law of Christ requires belief in the satisfaction he hath wrought: faith is called therefore 'faith in his blood,' Rom. iii. 25. The Spirit presseth men to accept of this satisfaction made by the Son, doth accompany the ministry of the word, gives some touches to men, instils some motions into them, and this frequently; for the law of Christ is not as the law at the creation was, the very day wherein thou neglectest or refuseth to accept of this satisfaction, thou shalt die the death. The patience of God concurs with the offers made by Christ, and gives time of respite; and the Spirit falls in to inform men of their undone condition, and persuade them to comply with the design of God. If then the new order of the Father, the satisfaction of Christ, the persuasion of the Spirit in the word, are all set at nought, what help can be looked for? There is not a fourth person to step in with any operations. The whole Trinity, and their personal operations, are particularly offered and slighted, the mercy of the Father, the satisfaction of the Son, and the importunity of the Spirit; since therefore there is no other God, no other Father, no other Son, no other Spirit superior to those, no other world under the government of another God, that any man can transport himself into (as a man may do upon the earth, pass into one country, when he hath offended the laws of another), where is there any relief? It must be in acting those methods over again, exposing his Son again to suffering, and that doth not consist with the wisdom and majesty of God. But suppose he should do so, there is as little hopes that a man will accept of it then as now, considering the natural enmity against God. And upon the same account that he should die a second time, there would be no end put to the reiteration of his sufferings. Besides (as was said before) the conditions cannot be more favourable; for God hath condescended to the lowest terms that you can suppose not only an infinite majesty, but a prince, nay, an inferior person can condescend unto, in the case of the revolt of a subject or servant. But the Scripture concludes the contrary, and therefore there must be a new scripture, a new declaration of God to give you intelligence of any design of God to reverse the sentence of this. When the law was broke, he made but one promise of the seed of the woman, and all the other promises in the word are but streams flowing, and channels cut, from this fountain; upon the breach of that law the Redeemer stood between consuming vengeance and the law-offending creature, and God was willing to repair the breach of the first law by the grace of a second, and sent his Son to close the gap, and reunite him and his creature. But where is there any provision made for the retrieving the final contempt of this? No revelation of God ever acquainted us with one counsel, or thought of God about it; it is denied by the mouth of our Saviour. If there were any other remedy, the wrath due to the contempt of this would not *abide*; but because it abides, therefore there is no remedy.

To conclude this and the rest, a man can expect no relief from any attribute of God. A man must have a bar put to it, either by justice or mercy : by justice he cannot, because he despiseth that wherewith justice was satisfied, and puts from him that screen God placed between the flames of his wrath and the fuel of a sinner ; by mercy he cannot, for he hath sinned against the highest pitch of it, and refused the terms wherewith mercy is contented. The wisdom of God cannot relieve him, for he hath rejected that which was the birth of an higher wisdom than ever was discovered in the creation. His wisdom is as much bound to keep up the honour of his justice and truth, as the honour of his mercy. Shall he have it from patience ? Patience and longsuffering are not, in the very notion of them, eternal, but temporary. Shall he fly to goodness ? Justice is a part of God's goodness, for he were not good if he were not righteous. The truth of God to such is a very comfortless attribute, that turns the edge of all the threatenings against him, who hath despised his veracity in his promise. Is there any more hopes in the power of God ? It is that people frequently talk of, God is sufficient and able. It is true, he is able to do more than any creature can conceive. But though God hath a natural power, he hath not, we say, a moral power after his word is past ; he would not be just if he used his power against his truth ; as we would not count a man just who would do that by strength which he could not do with honesty. The great reason of men's security is their singling out one attribute of God, without considering the concurrence and combination of the rest.

(7.) The law strengthens the sentence of the gospel against an unbeliever. The moral law condemns every man that doth not believe what God reveals.* We are to have no other gods before him, nor set up any graven image, nor fancy any [other] way and means of salvation than what God hath ordained. The gospel reveals the object of faith, the law then steps in and enjoins an entertainment of it, because it is the revelation of God. Christ tells the Jews that Moses accused them : John v. 45, ' Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father : there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom you trust ;' *i. e.* there is no need for me to charge you before God, you have one whom you think is your defender, will be your accuser for not believing in me. Moses, *i. e.* the law of Moses, meant properly of the ceremonies prefiguring him, and the prophecies in the books of Moses predicting him. But the law, taken singly for the law of nature, enjoins to believe whatsoever God discovers ; and the condemnation of men for unbelief will be by the law of nature, not as singly considered in itself, because it can so condemn only for the neglect of what it discovers ; it doth not discover Christ the object of faith, and therefore of itself cannot condemn for the neglect of Christ ; it judgeth men only for the violation of the immediate precepts of it, nor can the conscience of the best heathen, that never heard of Christ, accuse him for not inquiring after Christ, nor ever did, which doth accuse him for the breach of those rules which are evident by the light of it. But it condemns in concurrence with the gospel ; when the object of faith is discovered by that, and the evidence appears to be of divine authority, the law of nature urgeth the command to believe, both as we are bound to believe and obey the supreme governor, and also to preserve ourselves. And as it strengthens the command, so in the condemnation it strengthens the sentence. The law is quickened and spirited more by the gospel in its curses against an unbeliever. He must needs be miserable, which is condemned by the law, for the violation of its immediate precepts, and condemned by the law, in concurrence with the gospel, for the refusal of that.

* Burges, *Vindiciæ Legis*, p. 262.

(8.) God hath discovered his anger more against this sin of unbelief than any, both in his own children and in the Jews.

[1.] In his own children upon an act of unbelief. Moses was barred out of Canaan for one act of distrust of God; and he whose prayers had prevailed for the reprieving a murmuring nation from destruction, was not heard for himself because of his unbelief. God refuseth in the least to listen to him, but commands him silence when he did but desire to go over Jordan to see the good land: Deut. iii. 26, 'Let it suffice thee: speak no more to me of this matter.' This resolution God backed with an oath, Deut. iv. 21. The reason is expressed to be, 'because he believed not God to sanctify him in the eyes of the children of Israel,' Num. xx. 12. Moses had not such a firm faith but he did sometimes stagger at those great things which were predicted to him. But this act of distrust being public, striking the rock when he should have but spoken to it, might have encouraged the infidelity of the people, to which they were prone enough, without the example of their governor to support them in it. This unbelief of Moses kindled God's anger against him. Before, God patiently bore all his excuses, when he first appointed him to deliver his people Israel, and answered his pleas, Exod. iii. 11, Exod. iv. 1, 10-12; but when after all he desires God to stretch out his own hand, as he had promised,—Exod. iii. 20, 'I will stretch out my hand,' which is the meaning of Exod. iv. 13, 'Send by the hand of him whom thou wilt send;' send by that hand that thou wilt send or stretch out; stretch out this hand of thine, for the hand of man is not able to perform it, wherein saith Dr Lightfoot,* he denied the mystery of redemption, which was to be wrought by a man, the Godhead going along with him,—upon this, 'the anger of the Lord was kindled against him,' ver. 14. But his unbelief still took its progress, in taking Zipporah and his children along with him, which he would not have done in that condition, had he believed the promise of God, Exod. iii. 12, that the people should come to that place where he then was, in Midian, and serve God upon that mountain. Had he believed that promise, he would have left them still with Jethro till his return. For this distrust God sought to kill him, Exod. iv. 24, and not for the delay of circumcision, as some think, since God bore with the Israelites in the wilderness so long in the neglect of this ordinance, because of their frequent travel. If a particular distrust of God doth so incense him against his people, how must a gospel unbelief inflame him, which is a refusal or neglect of his Son, and the riches of his grace in him?

[2.] In the misery of the Jews. Why were they broken off from the root? Because of their unbelief, Rom. xi. 20. Not the crucifying of Christ, which was but a fruit of this sin. Had they believed after that guilt of blood, they had enjoyed the fruits of the mercy of God, by their faith in the Redeemer. This was the sole reason their ancestors were shut out from the typical Canaan. Not for their murmuring, idolatry, and multitude of provocations, but for their unbelief, the root of the other sins; no mention is made of their other rebellions, this only is the ground of God's oath against them: Heb. iii. 18, 19, 'So then we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.' What privileges had those people who are now cut off for this sin? They were chosen to be God's inheritance and portion, his vineyard, his spouse; he had 'chosen them above all people upon the face of the earth, to be a special people unto himself,' Deut. vii. 6. 'Them he had known of all the families of the earth,' Amos iii. 2. He was their lawgiver and their king, had nourished them in his bosom as a father, conducted them into Canaan, prescribed them a peculiar form of worship, secured them

* Lightfoot's Gleanings on Exod. iv. 24.

from their potent enemies round about them; overturned Egypt for their deliverance, 'gave Ethiopia for their ransom,' defeated the designs of their enemies against them. When God sent enemies to oppress them for some grievous crime committed against heaven, as when they fell into idolatry, and filled Jerusalem with the blood of the prophets, and for that were carried captives to Babylon, yet after they repented and sought his face, he was gracious to them, repented him of the evil, restored them to their inheritance, rebuilt their temple, made their enemies to be their friends, provided a succession of prophets to acquaint them with his will, yea, left them not without prophets in the time of their greatest desolations. He had besides this chiefly promised the Messiah to this nation, of the seed of their fathers. His first intention of sending him was to them: Mat. xv. 24, 'The word of God was first to be spoken to them,' Acts xiii. 46. Christ did come of them according to the flesh, lived among them, distilled his doctrine in person for three years' space upon them, when he taught the Samaritans but two days, John iv. 40, chose the apostles out of that nation, that were to spread the gospel over the world. But since they would not believe in the Messiah, neither by his own sermons, nor the sermons of the apostles, their own land hath spued them out. They are exposed to the miseries of the world, the derisions of men; their temple, and with that their main worship destroyed. And though they have sought him, in their manner, a longer term of years than ever they were a people before the coming of Christ (they came out of Egypt about the year of the world 2470, were destroyed about the year 3990; so that there were about 1520 years from the time of their coming out of Egypt to the destruction of Jerusalem), yet they have no voice to relieve them, no prophetic message to comfort them, the face of God is veiled from them, as their hearts are veiled from him, no nation hath been destroyed for them as before, but they are harassed by all, not the least dawn of deliverance appearing to them. All the covenants and agreements made with their fathers seem at present to be cancelled; and from their rejection, God took occasion to call the Gentiles, and to engraft the wild olives into the covenant of salvation. The destruction of their city was remarkable. God picked out one of the most merciful emperors that ever swayed the Roman sceptre to be the instrument of his justice, rather than some notorious tyrant steeped in blood, and fleshed with slaughters, that the punishment might more evidently appear to be the hand of heaven, and not the effect of the cruelty of man.* This heathen emperor took notice of the anger of God against them, by many prodigies, so that he said, he feared God would be angry with him, if he should spare them; and when he saw the blood spilt in Jerusalem, and the heaps of carcases, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, calling God to witness, that it was none of his work and design to have so much blood shed. Eleven hundred thousand perished by the sword and famine, ninety thousand were sold for slaves. Never was the hand of God so heavy upon any people, as upon them, and this for their unbelief. And whereas their other captivities were not above twenty, thirty, or forty years in the book of Judges, and seventy years in Babylon, they have now lain above one thousand six hundred years as a forlorn and forsaken people: 'Wrath is come upon them to the utmost,' 1 Thes. ii. 16; he hath 'set on fire the foundations of the mountains,' and spent his arrows upon them, Deut. xxxii. 22, 23. What did their adoption, their glory, the law, the divine oracles deposited among them, the promises to the patriarchs profit them, after their unbelief? 'If God spared not the natural branches,' shall he spare the strange branches that believe not? Rom. xi. 21. How sharp

* Fecinus, *de Relig. Christian*, cap. xxix. p. 51.

will his eternal wrath be upon the unbeliever, since his temporal wrath upon the Jew hath been so dreadful! He will 'pour out his indignation,' and his wrathful anger shall take hold of them, Ps. lxxix. 24. This discourse about the Jews proves our Saviour to be the Messiah, as well as the provocation of unbelief. This punishment must be for some grievous crime, greater than the causes of their other captivities. After their return from Babylon, they were not guilty of idolatry, or the slaughter of the prophets, till Christ came, whom they used worse than any of the prophets that went before him; and all this is come upon them, not simply for the crucifying Christ, but not knowing or believing 'the things which concerned their peace,' Luke xix. 42. And they are in that destruction set forth as an example of the eternal wrath of God upon all final undervaluers of Christ, and neglecters of the things that concern their peace, as well as Sodom and Gomorrah in their temporal punishment, and destruction of their bodies by fire from heaven, are set forth for an example, 'suffering the vengeance of eternal fire,' Jude 7. In the Scripture there are always some things of a greater and eternal concern couched under the historical part of it. Who, in reading the story of Melchisedec's coming to congratulate Abraham for his victory, would have thought him to be so great a type of Christ, had not David, Ps. cx., and after him the apostle, Heb. vii., informed us of it? Who would have regarded the destruction of Sodom, but as an effect of God's temporal justice, had not the apostle here informed us of its being a type of eternal fire? In like manner this deplorable desolation of the Jews, is but a type of the miserable destruction of unbelievers to eternity, whatever privileges they might have enjoyed on earth, and howsoever dear to God they might have imagined themselves.

2. Why doth final unbelief render a man infallibly the object of the wrath of God?

1. Because of the greatness of the sin. It is greater than any breach of the covenant of works can be.

(1.) It is a more manifest enmity to God's government of the world. When the covenant of works was transgressed, God as the rector required satisfaction by death and blood, according to the tenor of the violated law, and as a tender Father provided a surety to give a sufficient one, whereby to preserve his own rights which had been invaded, and relieve his creature which had been ruined. In not accepting the surety God had procured, we deny him the honour of his sovereignty, and the restoration of the rights of his government. We count him unworthy of any satisfaction, maintain our rebellion against him as justly grounded, and account ourselves innocent when we are criminal, since we will not own the satisfaction he hath procured, as if no satisfaction were due to him; which must imply that either we account ourselves no offenders, or God none of our governor, or that we are able to make him a requital ourselves, which is also a contradiction to the rights of government, since he hath an authority to appoint what satisfaction he pleaseth, according to the law which was settled by him, and broken by man. Since God provided a surety for us wherein he could acquiesce, he had a double right, both as rector and benefactor, to appoint what conditions should be performed by the creature before he should be admitted to the benefit of this charter he had sealed by the blood of his Son. The not accepting these conditions is a manifest injury to him, as he is his governor, and a gracious governor; because it is against not only a sovereign command, but a command of grace. It is as much his command to us to believe, as not to commit murder and adultery; and the breaking this command speaks more of enmity to him than

the breaking the others. He hath settled it as an eternal law, and his full resolve 'that all men should honour the Son as they honour the Father,' John v. 23. That every man without exception should honour the Son in the work of redemption, as the Father in the work of creation; and 'he that honours not the Son honours not the Father which hath sent him.' He that denies the honour of faith to Christ, denies the honour of homage and fealty to God, and disparageth the government of his Father, who as rector of the world appointed him, and under the same quality accepted him. Christ is the immediate representative of God, the image of the glorious God. The laws of God and the laws of Christ are the same, Ps. ii. 3; the cords and bands belong jointly to 'the Lord and his anointed;' to reject the laws of the one is to violate the authority of the other. What is done against the representative is against the majesty of the person represented by him. The Lord and his anointed can no more be separated in their authority than they can in their essence. If the Father be in the Son and the Son in the Father, John x. 38, the reproach cast upon the one redounds upon the other, as well as the entertainment of the one is said to be the reception of the other: Mat. x. 40, 'He that receives me, receives him that sent me.' If God pleads the cause of his servants, if those who rise against Moses are said to speak against God, Num. xxi. 5, and the murmurings against him are called the 'murmurings against the Lord,' Exod. xvi. 2, 7, and the rejecting of Samuel was a rejecting the government of God, 1 Sam. viii. 7, can less be said of the neglect of him whom God hath sent, not as a servant from a lord, but a son from a father? What greater evidence of a rooted enmity can there be against the sovereignty of a prince, than after multitudes of rebellions, tenders of gracious terms, a long series of invitations to accept of him, a desire that they might be restored to the happiness they had forfeited; after all this not to be reduced to his sceptre? The case is the same with us: God hath provided all means necessary to our restoration; nothing is wanting but our own concurrence with it. The enmity is greater, since there is no failure on God's part, since he hath done more than he was bound as a creator to do, or had need to do; and is it not just that obstinate rebels, who will not observe the rules of his government, should fall under the rod of his wrath?

(2.) It is a high ingratitude. The transgression of the law was against the authority and goodness of God; this against his authority, and against a goodness of an higher elevation, springing up in bowels of compassion, spreading its arms wider than in creation, and offering to confer a more excellent and durable happiness; it is against the tenders of remission in the blood of the Son of God, which in the first transgression man had no knowledge of (for there was nothing of grace mentioned in the first covenant). And who will not judge it more criminal in itself to slight or neglect the grace of a prince, in conjunction with his authority, than to violate only the authority of a prince in breaking his lawful and just command? Would it not be a crime worthy the indignation of all men, if twice, thrice, nay, innumerable times, the sincerest tenders of the greatest good should be refused? Who would have compassion for such a refractory person? Is not unbelief the more horrible crime in them who acknowledge Christ for the Son of God, the mediator between God and them, whereby they are so far from rendering it in the least manner excusable, that they highly aggravate it?

[1.] Consider the greatness of the mercy. God prevented us by his love: 1 John iv. 10, 'Not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins;' procured a surety for us, who valued our redemption above the pleasure of the body he assumed, and appointed

him for us when we had a desire to persist in our rebellion, not only after we had offended him, but when we were in actual offences still against him : Rom. v. 8, 'when we were yet sinners ;' not only when we had sinned, but when we were still adding one crime to another ; and this surety hath expended his treasures to purchase our deliverance, hath submitted to death to prevent our suffering of it ; he hath 'abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, 2 Tim. i. 10. He destroyed death, that had a power over us by the immutable sentence of the law, took away the right it had, despoiled the law of its power to condemn us, by condemning sin by the effusion of his blood on the cross, whereby the law had acquired a right of condemning us, and discovered the way to an immortal life, which we were estranged from by the darkness of sin, brought a message of peace from the bosom of the Father, whereby we might be eternal gainers. It is such a free mercy, that, if it had not been manifested, not God but we should have been the only losers. No mercy like it, no mercy can exceed it, no other mercy can equal it. 'So God loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son,' John iii. xvi ; a *so* beyond expression, a *so* beyond imagination ; nothing can surpass it but the sending him again to suffer ; and this only would be in circumstantial of repetition, not in the essentials and nature of the mercy.

[2.] From hence measure the greatness of the sin. The height, depth, length, and breadth of the mercy is the only rule to measure the dimensions of the sin against it by. The stronger and louder the bowels of mercy are which are slighted, the greater and blacker is the sin of despising him. The goodness of God in procuring, and the grace of God in accepting, a surety, are denied by this sin. Every act of it contemns the provisions of grace and contentments of justice, the attendances of patience, the tenderness of bowels, and the satisfactory blood of the Son of God. Is it not a strange carriage that when God is so merciful to offer remission, man should be so obstinate as to refuse it, and would rather die in his sin, hateful to God, and miserable for himself, than live by the Son of God, so acceptable to God and beneficial to man ; and when, besides the outward preaching of the gospel, there have been, by the common grace of the Spirit, some inward stirrings and approbation of the terms, which yet have vanished into a non-compliance ? The frequenter those motions, the greater the ingratitude added to the debts of all other sins contracted before. This unthankfulness for such a benefit is alleged as the cause of men's condemnation : John iii. 10, 'When light is come into the world, men love darkness rather than light.' When God hath provided a way to remove the guilt of their sins, the world will not part with the pleasure and profit of their sins. Can there be a baser requital than to be a partner with Judas in betraying him, with Pilate in condemning him, with the Jews in crucifying him ? What do we else but approve of all the barbarous usage he met with from the Jews, when we despise his authority in his evangelical command, refuse his person in his gracious proffers, and undervalue his sufferings by not applying them ?

Is not then a dreadful punishment of this sin very righteous ? By the law of nature, the greater kindness a creature receives, the greater punishment he doth deserve if he prove ungrateful. Since gospel grace exceeds all the benefits of creation, it is reasonable that the neglects of it should be attended with the greater punishment. When men will refuse the acceptance of it, and conformity to the will of God, which can only fit them for true happiness, a fuller measure of wrath is due to them that slight the fullest expense of mercy. Justice would not be justice if it used not them with the greatest severity that abuse grace with the greatest indignity : what is

greatest in the rank of sins, deserves the greatest misery in the rank of penalties. The greater benefit is conferred, the greater guilt is contracted by the neglect, and a stronger subjection to punishment in the order of justice. If it be a crime deserving a severe reflection to outrage an innocent person that never did us wrong, it is much more to spurn at a person who hath laid the foundation of our greatest good, and offereth that good to us upon the easiest terms. Such a carriage to a prince would be a greater indignity; how inconceivable a crime is it then against the King of kings, the Lord of glory, God blessed for ever, under all those inexpressible circumstances of innocence in his person, flames in his affection, kindness to the last drop of blood, and continued patience in waiting for our receiving the atonement! The rebellion of all other sins is wrapped up in this: John xv. 22, 'If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin;' so the gall of all other miseries is distilled into the punishment due to it. It is fit the furnace of wrath should be heated, to answer the flames of love which have been shooting towards them.

[3.] It is a sin against a clearer and fuller light and undeniable revelation. The gospel hath been first published by the Son of God in person, spread over the world by his apostles and their successors as the commissioners of Christ, entertained by multitudes in all ages since, transmitted to us in writing, delivered down to us by the contentions of our ancestors for the faith and the blood of martyrs. Nothing we believe in the world but it is upon less reason than we have to believe this. The belief of other things, for which we have little reason, and in some no reason, will aggravate our unbelief of those great things for which we have so much reason.

(1.) Heathens have had a less light, and abused it, and shall not escape punishment. This way of argument the apostle useth,* Rom. i. 16-19, to assure unbelievers of a dreadful vengeance. Though the design of the gospel be nothing but righteousness, life, and salvation to the believer, yet it breathes as much wrath against the neglecter as it doth happiness to the embracer; and without any charge of injustice upon God. For others who had a less light than that of the gospel, which discovered to them the power and eternity of God, it rendered them without any apology for themselves. The closing their eyes against that natural light, or abusing of it, and keeping natural truth in unrighteousness, *i.e.* lying in their sins against all the beams of light from the creation, will subject them to eternal punishment. The heathens had nothing but the dim light of nature, the effluxes of divine patience; but they could not read the covenant of grace in the motions of the heavens and orderly seasons of the year; they could not behold the Sun of righteousness in the material sun in the firmament; the heavens discovered the glory of a creator, but not the grace of a redeemer; there were characters of divine wisdom and power in the frame of the world, but nothing of his grace and pardoning mercy; therefore they are not condemned for not believing in Christ, since a mediator was not made known to them. They were bound to no more than Adam was; but Adam was not bound to believe a supernatural mystery till God had revealed it: and it cannot be expected that they, who never had an account of Christ, should believe in him. 'How can they believe in him of whom they have not heard?' Rom. x. 14; and if they be under an impossibility of believing for want of a revelation, how can they be condemned for not believing? But the sentence against them is grounded upon their despising the voice of the works of nature, the common mercy of God, and his patience manifested in them, whereby he called them to some reflection upon themselves, and repentance

* *Wren contra Catech. Racov.* sec. xxxvii. parag. 4.

for their iniquities. Since the law of nature was given man as a rule in creation,* they shall be examined whether they have done the things agreeable to the law written in their consciences, and they shall be judged according to the several measures of the light of reason which they had ; for it cannot be supposed that the barbarous nations that lived in a thick darkness, and had not the advantage of a polite and learned education to improve their reasons, shall have the same measure of judgment with those who had the waterings and dressings of a sounder education. (But neither one nor the other shall be judged according to the gospel, which exacts faith in the Redeemer). And according to this rule, not a man of them can escape ; and if it were the only rule to try all men by, not a man, from Adam to the last that shall be born upon the earth by natural generation, can avoid the just condemnation of God, because not a man of them but hath, one way or other, and that several times, transgressed that law ; for all are become guilty before God.

(2.) The Jews have had a less light than those under the gospel, though clearer than that of the heathens, and upon the abuse of this they shall not escape. The Jews who died before the coming of Christ, shall be tried according to the law of nature expressed in the decalogue, and that particular law of ceremonies given to them, wherein the Mediator was veiled. The Jews had the gospel printed in types and allegories, wrapped up in the pillar of a cloud ; Christ was not come in the flesh, nor the Spirit poured out upon the world ; they could not see the beauty of a redeemer for the smoke of their sacrifices, nor have a full prospect of his face through the grates and lattices of the ceremonies. There were also different measures of light among them, which may mitigate the condemnation of some, but not be a sufficient bar against a sentence of death.† For those of the Jewish religion, that did not believe in those promises or prophecies of the Messiah, in the time of the first entrance into Canaan, shall not have so great a punishment as those that lived after, when clearer prophecies were added. All judgment shall be according to the measure of light afforded ; according to the measure of it, God expects a suitable return ; for ‘ to whomsoever much is given, of them shall much be required,’ Luke xii. 48. Nor shall those that died in the wilderness, or first entered into Canaan, have so light a sentence as those of the old world, with whom the Spirit of Christ strove, but upon the account of one single promise given to Adam ; whereas the other had an increase of promises to Abraham, deliverances to themselves, an addition of types to represent the things promised, and the intention of them, to their eyes, which were stronger and more unanswerable grounds upon which the Spirit did strive with them in those times. Those of the Jews who had the least light of revelation, shall have a smarter punishment than the heathens, who had the strongest light of nature : ‘ Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile,’ Rom. ii. 9. As the Jew had the priority in privileges, so he shall have in the anguish prepared for the wicked. And many of them in the days of Christ in the flesh neglected him, not so much wilfully as out of ignorance, and prejudicate opinions of a conquering Messiah. If they could escape upon the witness of Paul, or rather upon the witness of the Holy Ghost, they should find relief ; Paul would not deny his own writing, nor the Holy Ghost his own inditing : 1 Cor. ii. 8, ‘ Had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory ;’ no, nor Christ his own testimony upon the

* Amyraut. *in symbol. Apostolic.* p. 222, changed.

† Amyraut. *in symbol. Apostolic.* p. 226.

cross, that they knew not what they did, Luke xxiii. 34. But can we call the Holy Ghost or the Redeemer to witness for us, if we believe not?

(3.) We have a clearer light than any of them had. It was indeed by his own Son that God spoke to the Jews, Heb. i. 2, but he did but begin to speak it; the stronger confirmations were afterwards by the gifts of the Holy Ghost poured out upon men: Heb. ii. 3, 4, 'God bearing witness from heaven' to the truth of his doctrine. We have the light of nature to answer for, we are bound to this as much as the heathen; they had no more of the light of nature than we have; the Jew had less understanding of the ceremonies than we have, they saw the types, and we have the manifestation of the substance, we have Christ in a plain letter and fairer print. We have the light of heathens, the light of the Jews, and a glorious light superadded to both those.

Now, it is according to this light God doth proportion the punishment of unbelievers under the gospel. The judgment, according to the apostle, respects two sorts of persons: 2 Thes. i. 8, 'Those that know not God,' and those 'that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.' The heathens that knew not God, when they had light enough in the creation to know him: and they that obey not the gospel, whether veiled or open; as veiled, it takes in the Jews before Christ; as open, it comprehends all to whom the gospel is preached. The question shall be asked such persons, whether they did believe in the name of the Son of God as the only mediator; and those that shall be convinced of a final unbelief, or disobedience to the evangelical declarations, shall incur the more grievous condemnation, because to the transgression of the law of nature, will be added over and above, the transgression of a special command of God, respecting their recovery. According to the rule of justice it must exceed the condemnation of the rest; since they have lived in the bosom of the church, and besides the neglect of that common to them with the heathen, have rejected the mediator made known to them, and not to the heathen. If the light of the darkest of them be sufficient to convict them before God without any excuse, much more must the light, revealed by the word, aggravate the guilt of men that close their eyes against it. They have not only the discoveries of God in nature, but the discoveries of God in grace, to answer for. The more excellent the truth is that is disobeyed, the greater the sinfulness of the disobedience; Hosea viii. 12, 'I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were accounted as a strange thing.' If the choicest revelation that God ever made, did not aggravate the punishment, why should the apostle say, 2 Peter ii. 21, 'It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness,' if they were in the same condition, wherein they were before they knew it? But how reasonable and righteous is the misery of those who have not only had the outward declarations of the gospel, but some common illumination of their minds, some motions of the Spirit, some approbations of the doctrine? If Paul had mercy because his unbelief was in ignorance, what mercy can they expect whose unbelief is with knowledge? 1 Tim. i. 13. Not that his ignorance deserved a pardon, for who can ascribe any merit to ignorance? The crucifying of Christ, the most horrid wickedness that ever the world saw, heaps not that guilt upon men whose hands were red with his blood, that unbelief doth upon men, who in opinion pretend to acknowledge him. The crime of the one was extenuated by their ignorance, and the crime of the other aggravated by their knowledge, as also, by the frequency of the impressions made upon them by the word. Well, then, if heathens shall be condemned, who had only the material heavens, and the sensitive, and insensitive creatures upon the earth preach-

ing to them, who had only God in his works, and the Jews who had God speaking to them in legal ceremonies, what will become of those who have had the voice of God, Christ, and redeeming blood calling to them in the word, and neglected all ?

(4.) This sin is a refusal of the only way of expiation of sin. When the law was violated, a relief was provided in the gospel. Because the law uttered not one syllable of forgiveness, the transgression of the law was not an offence against pardoning mercy, as the unbelief of the gospel is. This relieving mercy could not have appeared in the world in a contradiction to the justice of God ; this, to speak according to the manner of men, would have made a war in the divine nature, without the sacrifice of the Son of God in our nature. For because he assumed not the nature of angels, the fallen spirits are exposed to the rigours of justice, without any relief of mercy. If Adam had truly repented of his crime, he could not have obtained pardon without the satisfaction of the law, which was as silent in the command of repentance, as it was in the declaration of a pardon. When, therefore, there is a remedy provided, and no other remedy but this, nor can be any other remedy ; since no valuable sacrifice can be imagined for the taking away of sin but this, those that neglect it, render themselves incapable of security, by shutting themselves out of the only refuge. In all human contracts, a promise is only received * by assenting to and believing it. Though something may be taken from a man unwilling to part with it, yet nothing can be given to a man unwilling to accept it ; what right soever is transferred by the donor in a way of promise, is established by the other's assenting to it. If a prince promises a courtier a gift upon the performance of easy conditions, and he will not believe the word of the king, nor perform the reasonable conditions, the promise is not only void in itself, but the prince justly offended with his behaviour. Had the terms of the covenant been very hard, provided they had not been impossible, the damnation had been just had they been wilfully neglected ; but they are as reasonable as can be : repentance and faith. Is it not fit the justice of God should be acknowledged in its equity, and the holiness of God in its beauty, by a sensibleness of our crimes ; his grace in its freeness, by an acceptance of its provision ; and his sovereignty acknowledged by the payment of an homage to him ? Who would not count that rebel a sufferer by double justice who refuseth the pardon of his great rebellions, which he might have only for the acceptance of it, a sensibleness of his offence, and a sincere promise of his utmost service ? They are such reasonable conditions, that the honour of God, as well as the honour of a prince, would not be provided for, or have a salvo without them. If men will sell themselves to the slavery of a condemned sin, and a conquered devil, they can charge none with boring their ears to a perpetual misery, but their own folly. He that will choose to die by the sting of a fiery serpent, rather than live by the sight of the brazen one, can impute his ruin to no other but himself.

Christ hath made an expiation for sin, quenched the flaming sword that stopped the entrance into paradise. If men will not set their feet in that way, nor make any inquiries after it ; if they cast behind their back all exhortations to it, and never consider them in their minds, upon whom can they charge their destruction but upon themselves ?

If a man be in love with his misery, and will not stoop to him that would relieve him ; if he prefer his guilt before the expiation, his deplorable condition before a Saviour, his filthiness before a righteousness, it is juster that he should perish by the sin he chose, than be happy by a Saviour he refused.

* *Illyric. de fide*, p. 125. sect. xxxi.

His own act is in the nature of a confession of the equity of God's sentence, since God hath linked the gospel and everlasting life so close together that the one cannot be received or refused without the other. They 'judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life,' by 'putting away the gospel' from them, Acts xiii. 46. He tacitly declares that he would rather have God angry with him than pacified, when he refuseth the only means of a reconciliation. And the justice of his punishment is evident by the value of the propitiation which he refuseth, it being that which was the salvation of all the ancient believers before the oblation of the sacrifice, valuable enough to be the salvation of devils; that which was so prevalent with God in our Saviour's first consent to it, as to turn the tribunal of justice into a throne of grace; that blood which, sprinkled upon the soul, can turn the edge of the angel's destroying sword; that pure and spotless sacrifice which is the feast of God in heaven, which is daily presented to him by our Saviour in his office of advocacy, 1 John ii. 1, 2. Can there be less justice than to inflict damnation upon those who wilfully neglect that which hath been the only way for the salvation of millions, and might be efficacious for theirs, if they would accept of it upon God's terms? Nay, they impose upon themselves a necessity of damnation, who cast away the means of salvation. How can his chains be knocked off, that slights redemption? How can he be washed, that stops by his infidelity the blood of Christ from flowing out upon him? What disease can be healed, if the only proper remedy for it be not applied? Is not he as much guilty of his own death, that rejects a medicine, tears a plaster off from his wounds, as he that cuts his own throat with a knife? They have but the fruits of their own wilfulness, and must at last subscribe to the equity of God's judgment, because the desert of it was their own choice.

3. What kind of misery this is.

It is

1. Inevitable. The end of the enemies of the cross of Christ is destruction, Phil. iii. 18. The righteous hath a 'sure reward,' Prov. xi. 18; the unrighteous must have as sure a punishment: 'perishing from the way' is the absolute issue of the 'kindling of his wrath,' Ps. ii. 12. Death will certainly enter in at that door; there is no more possibility of escape than for a man mortally wounded in a vital part to avoid death entering in at his wound. Every man must render an account before the judgment seat of Christ. Shall men render an account of their time, wealth, the abuse of the faculties of their souls, and members of their bodies? and shall they not as certainly render an account of that which is more precious than all these: the grace of God, and the blood of Christ offered to them and injured by them? Is there any shelter from the all-seeing eye of God, in the caves of the deep or under the mountains of the world? Poor Adam sought it in the thickets of paradise, but was forced to come out at the call, 'Adam, where art thou?' Gen. iii. 9, 10. What refuge can be imagined? The covenant of grace is the city of refuge against the pursuit of the covenant of works; that is our hope under our fetters for the breaches of the law, Heb. vi. 18. Where can we fix an anchor of hope to secure ourselves from the storms of this? The apostle puts the question indeed, 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?' Heb. ii. 3. But the resolution of it was above his invention; he knew not one tittle of encouragement in the whole book of God, though no man better acquainted with it. What do I speak of the apostle? The Holy Ghost himself, who indited what the apostle did write, knew none. The transgressions of the law subject men to a desert of condemnation; but this sin exposeth men to a necessity of damnation, since all the methods of God for procuring remission have been rendered

useless by the refusal of that merit that purchased it, and that mercy that appointed and offered it. When justice condemns in the law, a liberty of appeal is reserved to mercy in the gospel; if mercy in the gospel condemns for want of the conditions necessary to the enjoyment, what reserve is left? No way of relief but by injustice, which is not to be found in the divine nature.* After man had wounded himself, and sunk down at the feet of the law, a promise was clapped in as a plaster; but is there a syllable in the whole Scripture of any other remedy? It never yet thought of any other security; God never revealed any other for the repair of his own honour, which suffered by sin; and why should the creature imagine any other for his own recovery? Yes; but we know not but God may have a reserve in his own counsel. Certainly men that pretend to believe the gospel must have some such conceit; they could not else be such desperate enemies to themselves as not to labour after a thorough work of faith. But would any but a prodigiously mad man run the hazard of such a conceit? What footing can such an imagination have after all God's declarations to the contrary? If the laws of a king threaten an unavoidable punishment for a crime, would not that man be a bedlam that would venture the transgression of it upon hopes of a reserve, when he finds not a syllable in the law for such an encouragement, but the whole design to the contrary? Necessity of state sometimes is a bridle to restrain the punishment of an offender; but the eternal order of God is so constituted that there can be no necessity upon him, for the advantage of heaven or earth, to remit the punishment of a final unbeliever.

Consider,

[1.] It is a God who hath passed his word. God never speaks but he intends to perform; his words shall stand before men's imaginations of security; his conditions he will not alter. He cannot save such men; his oath stands in the way; his repeated declarations are a bar against it. What greater obligations than an oath, and the oath of God, which is a swearing by himself? and as sure as I am God, and as sure as I live, I will do such a thing? Shall God deny his own deity for a rebel's security? Heb. iii. 18, 'To whom swear he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?' They shall not enter into a gospel state, to have the benefits of Christ, who is the rest of God. Since the Scripture is written for our instruction, it concerns every man in a state of unbelief, and assures them, if it be final, they shall not set a foot within the gates of heaven. God never passeth his oath but to confirm what he is resolutely bent to perform; he swears to the promises, that the believers may have strong consolation; he swears to the threatening, that unbelievers may have dismal apprehensions. Some humbled souls think God is not so merciful as he declares; he swears to expel their doubts. Presumptuous persons think God is not so just; he swears to expel their vain conceits. This sin ties up, as it were, the hands of an omnipotent mercy from saving such a one. The apostle intimates that God is not able to save without faith (Rom. xi. 23, 'If they bide not still in unbelief, they shall be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again'), in asserting that God is able to graft the Jews in upon their faith. God is not morally able to do anything against his word and settled methods of his grace; and because God hath passed his word, and denounced those judgments which he executes, he is said to slay men 'by the word of his mouth and the breath of his lips,' Isa. xi. 4; and the sharp sword wherewith he smites the nations goes out of the mouth of Christ, Rev. xix. 15.

[2.] God hath promised to take the punishment of final unbelievers into his own hands. The revenge of injuries done by one man to another belongs

* Whom oil and balsam kill, what salve can cure?—*Herbert.*

to God, and he will recompense them; the vengeance of injuries done to his Son doth as much belong to him. He values the obedience of Christ in his death too high to suffer men to slight it without the recompence of a certain indignation; and who can avoid the recompence he will inflict? Heb. x. 30, 31. What sanctuary can there be against the wrath of an all-knowing God, who hath promised Christ to take the work into his own hands, and be the destroyer of all his enemies? Ps. xc. 1, 'Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool.' He will employ all his power against them. This power is ascribed here to the Father, not that the Son is unable to conquer his enemies, but to shew his mighty affection to the office of priesthood he had settled his Son in, and his resolution to maintain the rights of it, and revenge any indignity offered to it; also because acts of power are ascribed to the Father, as acts of wisdom to the Son. God cannot be true to his Son, nor true to himself, having passed his word to his Son, and published that word to us, unless he punished unbelievers. This is part of the honour God intends him, wherein he will take pleasure, as well as in seeing him sit gloriously at his right hand; and this he had assured men of before, that he would require exactly an account of their refusal to listen to the words of the great prophet which should speak in his name.* And lest any think that, though it be unavoidable, if they fall into the hands of the living God, yet they may have some shelter from his fury; no, the right hand of God, his hand of strength and power, shall find out the enemies of Christ in their most secret recesses: Ps. xxi. 8, 'Thy hand shall find out all thy enemies, thy right hand shall find out them that hate thee;' none shall escape the being hurled into a fiery oven by the power of his hand. The psalm was anciently applied by the Chaldee paraphrast to the King Messiah. Who can rescue the soul that is grasped in the wrathful hand of God? What champion can keep off the blow, unless it be one that can match God in strength and power? Nor will God be diverted by the cries of obstinate rebels, when he was not persuaded by the strong cries and prayers of Christ to take the cup of suffering out of his hand.

Besides, though Christ be clad in his priestly garments, he hath 'feet like brass, as if they burnt in a furnace,' heavy and hot to trample upon his enemies, Rev. i. 13, 15; he hath 'eyes like a flame of fire' to find them, and 'feet like brass' to crush them; so that upon all accounts the misery is unavoidable. The condition of the heathens renders them inevitably miserable; for, being 'without Christ,' they are 'without hope,' Eph. ii. 12. Faith in the promise is the foundation of the hope of blessedness; no freedom without it from the sentence of death to which the law hath adjudged us; no freedom from the spiritual death which sin hath engendered in us. It is as inevitable as the misery of devils; they perish because they have no mediator, and men perish because they will not receive a mediator.

2. Speedy misery. As Christ is a swift help, so he is declared to be a 'swift witness' against the unrighteousness of men, Mal. iii. 5. God is quick in his judgments where the gospel is contemned; the black, red, and pale horse—plague, war, and famine—followed the heels of the white horse, to cut off them that would not be conquered by the rider on it, Rev. vi. 2, 4, 5, 8. God is more quick and severe in his justice under the gospel than before; the former times before the exhibition of Christ were the times of God's patience, wherein 'God winked at the times of ignorance; but if his command of repentance and faith be neglected, nothing is to be expected but a severe judgment, Acts xvii. 30, 31. As he hath revealed his righteousness 'from faith to faith,' so he hath 'revealed his wrath from heaven,' Rom. i.

* Deut. xviii. 19, אֲדַרְשׁ, I will diligently require it; אֲנִי, I myself.

17, 18. When he made a promise of the effusion of his Spirit in the times of the gospel, Joel ii. 28, 29, he couples with it a threatening of judgments as the fruit of the contempt of the gospel: ver. 30, 31, 'I will shew wonders in the heavens, and in the earth, blood and fire, and pillars of smoke, before the day of the Lord,' *i.e.* from the time of the pouring forth the Spirit, and the contempt of his grace, there shall be a confusion in all parts of the world where the gospel is contemned, and that in a constant succession till the great day of the Lord. We may know to what cause to ascribe the turning of the sun into darkness, and the moon into blood in a nation. The same reason of the speediness of judgment holds in the case of a particular person; whosoever 'bears thorns and briers, is nigh unto cursing,' Heb. vi. 8. The good earth is said to be blessed by God; but the bad earth is not said to be cursed, that we may not despair, but 'nigh to cursing,' that we may hasten our fruitfulness. It cannot be long before the power of God will vindicate his injured mercy, and deliver men up into the hands of justice, to answer for the violations of his law and contempt of his grace. The time of God's waiting is bounded in narrow limits. The life is a short vapour, which appears a while and quickly vanisheth. What are a few days or years—yea, or Methuselah's age—to keep off the plague which shall last for ever? Unconceivably less than a grain of sand, compared with the whole mass of heaven and earth, if pounded into dust.

3. Sharp misery. It abides; the first wound is not so smart as a constant gnawing of a vulture. As the apostle could imagine no way to escape it, so he could not imagine any way to express it: Heb. x. 29, 'Of how much sorer punishment?' He leaves it to every man's fancy to screw it to the highest. So sore, that the malefactor shall feel it without being able to declare the torture of it. And thus Peter leaves it to men to imagine, since he was unable to express it: 1 Peter iv. 17, 18, 'What shall the end be of those that obey not the gospel?' and 'where shall the ungodly and sinners appear?' We can no more conceive the terror of the wrath due to this, than we can conceive the grandeur of that love which has been abused, and the dignity of the person of his Son which is injured by it. The most scorching receptacles in that fiery oven seem to be reserved for unbelievers: Luke xii. 46, 'The Lord shall appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.' A vengeance is due to such, Heb. x. 30, which is not a simple punishment, but one with rigour. It knows no mitigation; not a drop of a water will be allowed to temper the devouring flame. Hell would rather solicit for a further addition of wrath to one that despised the only begotten of the Father; a man's own conscience will tell him it is rather below than above his demerit. Though the punishment of sin against the law was a separation from God, yet this separation may admit of degrees; one may be further cast from God than another, into the depths and lowest dungeon of hell. The young man was in a nearness to the kingdom of heaven, yet not in it, but in a state of alienation from God.

(1.) God takes the punishment of such into his own hand. God will be a 'consuming fire,' Heb. xii. 29. Fire is the sharpest of all the elements, insinuates into every part of combustible matter, and the wrath of God into every part of the soul; it devours with an invincible force whatsoever it lays hold on. Though God be full of goodness and mercy to them that believe, yet he is like a consuming fire to those that scorn the covenant of his Son; and with no less, but much more, fury will he consume the slights of that, than he did the despisers of the old administration. This sin puts God upon the discharging all his fury. The breath of his mouth, that before invited men, shall blow the fire: Isa. xxx. 33, 'The breath of the Lord, as a stream

of brimstone, doth kindle it.' It is not a simple punishment, but wrath abides, the wrath of an infinite God, infinitely understanding to invent, and of infinite power to inflict the bitterest pains; which must be more sharp than any in this life, because all the bars of patience which stopped the overflowing scourge, and the long-suffering of God upon the account of the mediation of Christ, shall abstain from any further exercise. It must be as sharp as justice armed with infinite power can render it, according to the capacity of the subject. What cannot Omnipotence do? As when the covenant is received, God is our God in the employment of his infinite perfections for us; so when the covenant is outraged, God is our judge in the employment of his infinite perfections against us. Patience shall not stir a finger, mercy will look contemptibly* upon them. When the first covenant was broke, justice punished and mercy relieved; when the second is finally despised, justice inflicts the punishment, and mercy contemns the sufferer. That mercy which called them will laugh at their calamity, Prov. i. 24, 26, 27, 28. It is not vindictive justice, but tender mercy, which calls men to repentance. It is not vindictive justice men will seek in their distresses, but pity and compassion from their judge. But that attribute whereby God stretched out his hand in kindness, that attribute which men in their anguish will call upon for relief, will not only be speechless, but mock, when their fear comes. As justice joins hands with mercy in the pardon of a believer, upon the satisfaction of Christ, so mercy will join hands with justice for the punishment of an unbeliever that either spurns at it or neglects it. Justice shall hurl them in, and mercy roll the stone upon the mouth of hell. Mercy will mock them, and mocking is none of the lightest ingredients in the punishment of a malefactor. How heavy must that condemnation be, which is pronounced by a mercy turned into fury! Since God inflicts it, the punishment for the neglect of his grace will be suited to that joy he had in the effusions of it. We may measure his anger against the rebels by the delight he had in his Son for undertaking the work of redemption, and the joy he expressed upon his performing it. No greater honour could be bestow upon his return to heaven than the seating him at his right hand, giving him power over all the angels, more terrible judgments than must fall upon them that despise the priesthood of Christ, so acceptable to God, which shall, by the decree of God, like Aaron's rod, the type of it, flourish for ever.

(2.) It will be suited to the greatness of what hath been contemned. As much as the covenant excels the other in grace and glory, so much shall the vengeance for the despising it exceed the punishment due to the transgression of the other. A heinous sin deserves intolerable plagues. Sins against the light of nature are of a meaner tincture than those against the gospel. There was a death without mercy for the transgression of the law of Moses, Heb. x. 28, composed only of the shadows of this; must there not then be an addition of vengeance to those that make light of the substance? The punishment in order of justice must be suited to the greatness of the crime. As it is a total injustice to let a crime pass with impunity, so it is a partial injustice to let it pass with a punishment less than it merits. The dignity of the person injured, the Son of God, and God in him, greatens the crime, and consequently the punishment. With what an infelicity must such an indignity to God be attended! We are not only to answer to justice for the violations of an holy law, but the expense of a tender mercy. And if an offence against God, as the author of our being, deserves at the hands of an infinitely offended majesty a just recompence of reward, much more must the rejecting the tenders of his grace, whereby as a fountain of goodness he

* That is, 'contemptuously.'—ED.

would send forth richer streams of happiness than at the creation. We abuse that which we had not the least right to demand, nor God the least obligation to give. Some things the nature of God obligeth him unto. God might choose whether he would create man; but when he resolves to create a rational creature, the holiness of God obligeth him to create him holy. He may choose whether he would make a covenant of grace; but when he hath made it, his nature will not permit him to start from it. God might choose whether he would offer grace; and therefore the freer the grace, the blacker the abuse of it, and the sorer the punishment due to it. As there were liberal showers of grace, there shall be fuller vials of wrath; as grace to the utmost, so wrath to the brim. The devil, who had not the least share of created wisdom, by his abuse of it, rendered himself most accursed; and men by the abuse of grace, render themselves most abhorred by God. As where sin hath abounded grace is sweeter, so where grace hath abounded, and is not received, wrath is sharper, and the heat of wrath is proportioned to the flame of love. And as it is against the greatest mercy, so it is against a greater evidence of God's holiness and justice in the death of his Son. The end of the death of Christ was that 'God might shew himself just;' Rom. iii. 26, 'that he might be just,' *i. e.* known to be just. Now, after this public discovery of his justice, this sin is a daring his justice more than any sin under the law. Then there was only a verbal declaration of the justice of God; but in the death of Christ, the highest sensible demonstration of it to the sons of men.

(3.) It will be suited to the excellent rewards of faith. As the rewards of faith are so great, that neither ear hath heard, nor heart can conceive, so must the plagues for unbelief answer the greatness of those. The reward of Adam's obedience appears not to be any other than a continuance in that happy state in paradise wherein he was created; wherein it is like he might after some trial of his obedience have been confirmed by the grace of God, as the angels are in their glorious estate in heaven. As his reward seems not altogether to be the same which is promised in the gospel, *viz.*, a being with Christ for ever to behold his glory; so the punishment threatened upon his transgression of the command is not the same with the punishment threatened in the gospel; and though it was more than a temporal death, or a separation of soul and body, which seems to be too light a punishment for an offence against the infinite majesty of God, and would not have answered the enormity of the crime (could the pain of a few hour's satisfy God for a sin, whose guilt and filth would be perpetual without pardon and sanctification?); yet it was not so bitter a death as is threatened upon the breach of the new covenant; for all punishment follows the measure of the ingratitude and greatness of the obligation, which was not the same in his sin as it is in ours; and therefore it is expressed by the addition of death unto death: 2 Cor. ii. 16, 'The savour of death unto death;' a death with more pangs superadded by the gospel to the death inflicted upon Adam by the law. As those that have believed in the name of the Son of God, and walked according to that faith, shall be eternally freed from all the curses of the moral law, and the dreadful threatenings sprinkled in the gospel; so those that shall die in their unbelief, shall for ever lie under the curses of the one, and the executed threatenings of the other. We find that as the promises in the Old Testament were not so spiritual and clear, respecting for the most part the land of Canaan, and temporal goods; so the threatenings are not so sharp, respecting for the most part temporal losses and outward judgments. As the joys of heaven were, under that dispensation, veiled under temporal promises, so the terrors of hell were veiled under temporal

curses. But in the gospel there are clearer promises of an eternal glory, and answerable to them, there are more dismal threatenings of an eternal loss. There is 'utter darkness' to answer an 'inheritance in light;' a never-dying worm to answer to everlasting joys; rivers of brimstone to answer to rivers of pleasures; an eternal separation from God, and the everlasting society of devils, to answer to an eternal communion with God and the blessed angels.

(4.) It will be suited to the knowledge or means of knowledge men had. The heathens will have a single condemnation, for not improving the light of nature; the Jews a double, for neglecting that light, and the instructions of the law. A treble condemnation remains for them that neglect both these, and the discoveries of grace more glorious and plain, than nature or law with a richer manifestation ever could be. The damnation of the first will be a pleasure to the miseries of the last, who will have more than an ordinary damnation. To have Christ and his blood preached to men, engenders more knowledge than the instructions of the heavens, and the creatures of the earth, with a conscience guided by a dimmer light. Tyre and Sidon shall have a lighter sentence than Chorazin and Bethsaida; they might have reformed upon less means, when those were not converted by greater, Mat. xi. 21-24. Tyre, a place of knowledge, famous for excellent arts, from whence a greater part of the Grecian learning was derived; a place of notorious idolatry, whence the Jews had sometime drawn the contagion; a place of great pride and luxury, threatened with grievous plagues by God, Ezek. xxvi.; yet this place, though sinning against much natural knowledge, shall fare better than the cities of Judea. Sodom, the stain of mankind, a place soaked in the dregs of villany, who sinned against an eminent deliverance bestowed upon them for the sake of Lot, and also against many admonitions from that person, who could not but testify the vexation of his righteous soul for their wickedness, that would have committed wickedness with the angels, and that when they were under the judicial hand of God striking them with blindness, guilty of those abominations which likely not a man in Capernaum was guilty of; yet this hell upon earth shall have a milder hell at the day of judgment than unbelieving Capernaum, a place that had often given entertainment to Christ in the days of his flesh, blasphemed not his doctrine when they heard it, nor ascribed his miracles to the devil when they saw them, as the pharisees did; yet those, for want of faith, shall be more inexcusable than the other; the one offended against the light of nature, the other against the light of grace, published by the mouth of the only Son of God. The means of grace men have had, will sharpen the sting of conscience to pierce more deep: 'The word shall judge men at the last day,' John xii. 48. The doctrine of grace, and the instructions of the gospel, struck in upon their minds, shall rise up in their consciences, as so many witnesses against them. And though suppressed here by unrighteousness,* shall, like fire buried in a heap of ashes, sparkle again, and make their consciences as a fiery oven, as the expression is, Ps. xxi. 9, and engender a more enflamed hell within them, than all other miseries can without them. Every principle of truth, whether approved of or no, shall be as the sting of a scorpion; all which meeting together, shall render them more self-tormented creatures than the worst of the Tyrians, or the most villanous rake-hell in Sodom, though there were no outward pain or misery to afflict them.

Well, then, it is a sore punishment: 'Then will he speak to men in his wrath.' When? When they 'take counsel against the Lord and his anointed, and cast away his cords from them,' Ps. ii. 5, he will 'swallow them up in

* Reynolds on Hosea, Serm. vii. p. 158.

his wrath,' Ps. xxi. 9. The curses of the law brake men in pieces, but the rejected Son of God in the gospel, like a stone from an high ascent, grinds them to powder, Mat. xxi. 44. So that it had been happy for them if grace had never appeared to them, since they have gained nothing by it but a more stinging damnation.

4. Irreversible wrath ; it abides, permanent, not transient, not a volatile but a fixed wrath. As it is fire for severity, so it is unquenchable for duration, Mark ix. 43, 45. There is no more recovery from it than there is for a man shut up in a red-hot oven. If it be reversible, it is only so by God ; all the creatures in heaven and earth, in a joint combination, cannot blow away the fire that is not blown by man, as the expression is, Job xx. 26. God hath declared himself to admit of no remission without blood, Heb. ix. 22, what hopes, then, unless another redeemer can be provided to match Christ in as valuable a satisfaction, by the price of his blood ? This hath already been accepted as sufficient by the Father, seconded by the Holy Ghost in his solicitations, as an advocate to men to accept it. But suppose it were possible to offer an infinite ransom to God for the recovery of our souls. How is God obliged to accept that, since that which he hath appointed and accepted hath been refused ? There was no obligation upon him to appoint and accept the first, it was purely an act of grace ; there can be as little or less upon him to accept a second. He might have exacted the sentence of the law, that the soul that sins shall die, and never have granted any to stand in the room of the sinner ; and so he may still, if we consent not to what he hath approved. The sufferings of men for transgressions must be as bitter as the sufferings of Christ ; the law requires it ; but they must be more durable than his, in regard of our impotency for satisfaction. This impotency being eternal, the suffering must be of the same duration ; and though Christ suffered for the transgressions against the first covenant, and the temporary transgressions against the new, yet he suffered not for final unbelief and impenitency. 'After death the judgment,' Heb. ix. 27. The embracing the sacrifice of Christ is limited only to this life ; no offers are made after death. 'The axe is laid to the root of the tree,' in the time of the gospel, Mat. iii. 10. Patience under the law suffered the tree to stand, justice under the gospel brings the axe to the root, and what is not fit for the building is reserved for the fire. A tree cut off from the stock cannot be fastened on again to grow ; and it is not a wayfaring, but a 'dwelling with everlasting burning,' that every unbeliever is adjudged unto, Isa. xxxiii. 14. But suppose God should give a respite, and restore a man to life, and to hear the preaching of the gospel, what assurance is there that men would comply with the truths of God, if they had the habits of their old sins as strong in them as before ? Is it not too frequent to break solemn vows, as easily as Samson snapped in pieces the cords that bound him ; and that while they have been sensible of the gnawings of conscience ? If men 'believe not Moses and the prophets,' nay, a greater than Moses and the prophets, they would not believe the report of one licensed to come from the place of torments ; and as little believe, or quickly forget, their own feeling.

Use. First of information.

1. May we not see and admire the patience and goodness of God towards us ? Doth the wrath of God abide upon every unbeliever ; doth he lie under the iron mace of the law, ready to be crushed every moment, if God speaks the word ; hath a sword, edged with the bitterest curses, hung over our heads by the brittle thread of a frail life ? What if God had let the iron mace fall upon us and broken the thread, and made us possess the wrath that we had merited, not only by nature but by our infidelity ? This

patience would not have waited on us one moment had not that Christ we despised interposed himself for our reprieve, and presented the merit of his blood to stop the flood of divine fury. How have we been beholding to that God, whose grace we have abused, in bearing with us; and to Christ, whose bowels we have spurned, in soliciting for us while we were kicking at him? None of us but have been mightily beholden to God for his patience, and some no question for a pardon. How hath riches of goodness and forbearance waited upon us without any regret, to lead us to repentance, while we have stood it out in rebellion, Rom. ii. 4. He did not reckon with us for our debts, and by his long-suffering stopped the vengeance that longed to seize us. Had not our natural corruption rendered us fit to be clapped up in his eternal prison, when we were in our cradles, and our perversity exposed us to a greater punishment, when we have stood out in the maintaining of our forts against him? His threatenings continually pointed at us, yet are not put in execution upon us. It is not that we were not fuel fit enough for his wrath, it is not that he was ignorant of our crimes; for none but he, no, not our own consciences, knows what scores of talents we were indebted, and what demerit there was in every act of sin. Has he not arrested some who were less in his debt, put others' bonds in suit, and let ours lie by? Had he snatched away any present believer in his former state of infidelity, his condition had been eternally deplorable. Blessed be God for unwearied patience, that hath hitherto reprieved us; and blessed be God for overpowering grace, that hath secured any of us from that wrath which is due to infidelity!

2. May we not take notice of the extreme folly and madness of those that remain in a state of unbelief? It is folly in the judgment of our Saviour, for he couples 'fools, and slow of heart to believe,' in the rebuke he gives his disciples, who had already some principles of faith in them, though buried under the clods of some prejudicate opinions, Luke xxiv. 25. So folly and disobedience, or unbelief (as the word is sometimes rendered), are put together: Tit. iii. 3, 'Foolish and disobedient.' To follow any sin, upon which misery is entailed, is a senseless course; but to lie in this, which stakes us down to that misery, is as great a madness as it is a sin. As the loss of the soul is the most dreadful loss, so the neglect of the soul is the most unreasonable neglect. Men that will deliberate, and toss things of a worldly concern in their heads, will not employ time in the consideration of the things of another world; nay, will not so much as inquire into the corruptions of nature, or provisions of divine grace, and have their excuses ready framed to put back any invitation to the true path of their own happiness, as in Luke xiv. 18; as if they had entered a league, offensive and defensive, with the pleasures, profits, and lusts of the world against God.

(1.) Is this because any question the truth of the Christian religion, and think the maxims of it to be mere fables? which perhaps may be in the secret of many hearts, though the way lies not plain for an outward expression. Are you sure it is not of a divine stamp? Suppose it were not, is it any prejudice to your happiness? You are exhorted by it to live virtuously. This is that which philosophers by the light of reason have prized and practised. No man dishonours God by receiving a doctrine, so far as it obligeth to such a carriage; is there anything in the whole scheme which makes to the dishonour of the deity? Doth a Trinity seem too mysterious? Some heathens did not think it incredible, since something of that nature hath been published by them, derived from those that had, mediately or immediately, conversed with the Scripture. Do we understand the nature of angels; yea, the nature of our own souls, and what the distinction of the

faculties are ? and shall we presume to deny a doctrine linked with so many others highly agreeable to the reasons of men, because it is above our reach, as the nature of God is infinitely more than the nature of angels ? Or doth the death of the Son of God seem unreasonable ? Is there anything in it disparaging the honour of God ? Is not his faithfulness to his law, his love to his creature, the purity of his nature, and hatred of sin, mightily manifested hereby ? Is it repugnant to reason that a divine person may voluntarily assume a body, be in a low condition for a time, in that nature which he assumed, that he may be happy in that nature for ever after ? Or is it a thing altogether unknown among men, for one to answer for the faults of another, by an excess of friendship ? But if those things which you will not believe prove to be true at last, that the Son of God hath suffered by God's appointment for the expiation of sin ; that those that believe in him, and resign up themselves to his government, shall receive the benefits of it, and none else ; what a madness will you then think yourselves guilty of ! There is nothing in the whole frame of the Christian religion can make against your real happiness, supposing it were not true. But if it be true, the opinionative or practical slighting of it exposeth you to a most unexpressible misery. If the things revealed prove true, when it is too late to gather the blessed fruit of them, will a bottomless lake, a perpetual stinging conscience, be balanced by a few transitory pleasures on earth ? Is it not an unreasonable folly to deny a doctrine you cannot demonstrate to be false, and be in danger to feel a misery, that you cannot demonstrate but it may come upon you, rather than comply with those doctrines which cannot do you any prejudice in the great concerns of your souls, supposing they were not true ? It is a folly utterly to deny them till you can demonstrate there is no such thing as a Redeemer, that the Scripture is not the word of God, that no such condition as faith is required of men. But let me ask the question, Is there nothing that troubles your consciences sometimes ? Have you not some fears in your retirements ? (if such men have any retired inspection into themselves) do you believe those fears springing up in your consciences to have any ground or no ? If you think them groundless, why do you trouble yourselves with them without a cause ? Why can you not expel them ? If there be any just cause for them, and that they haunt you whether you will or no, why do you not look after a remedy ? Would you not yourselves account that man mad, who, lying under a troublesome distemper, would inquire after no medicine ?

(2.) Or is the reason of this neglect because you expect happiness from something else ? No man in his right wits can build his felicity upon any earthly foundation ; scarce any sort of rationalists ever did ; in God was felicity placed by them. It is as great a folly to expect happiness from anything else, as to expect water from dry ashes, or a heap of gold from a burden of straw. And can any more rational method be framed to bring us to God, than what Christianity affords us ? But since we acknowledge the truth of the Christian religion, and the authority of the Scripture, can we propose any good to ourselves by neglecting the grace of God offered in it ? Do you think Christ a Sun of righteousness ? Do you acknowledge that he is the purchaser of blessedness, and God the fountain of it ? Why, then, do any foolishly neglect the rejoicing in, and walking by that light, and drinking of those streams ? Would you not laugh at that man that would turn his back upon the sun, to warm himself by a candle, as though there were more heat to be expected from that than from the other ? Would you not stand astonished at one that should thrust away a rich wine from him, to

drink of a miry puddle? What we blame in others, we may charge ourselves with in spiritual things. To keep a distance from the fountain of life, is the way to continue in a perpetual death. How can we expect to benefit ourselves by anything, when we despise or neglect the only fountain wherein God hath placed salvation? What good can be proposed to ourselves by resting upon anything else, but the strengthening our fetters, gratifying our grand enemies, and binding over our souls to a perpetuity of wrath? Mercy will be displeased, God more provoked, and reigning sins strengthened to bring damnation.

(3.) Is it not a folly to neglect a necessary happiness which you may have? It is not only offered, but pressed; God importunes you, your consciences goad you on. It comes near to you, the divine mercy of the gospel encompasseth you round. Can there be a greater folly than to starve when we may have bread? to be willing to be shipwrecked in our bottom, rather than to pass into another vessel for a certain security? What do you think of Adam? Do you think him wise for preferring an apple before the delights of paradise? Let us put ourselves in the same rank, if we prefer a feather before a pearl, and endless misery before an happy immortality. No folly like that, to affect to be damned rather than be saved, when salvation may be procured, in some respect, upon easier terms for us than ever damnation can. Who can deserve a better character than that of a fool and madman, whose soul is not awakened to mind eternity by the sword of justice that glitters in his eye; but rather dares the sharp edge to do its worst, and this upon vile terms, to gratify some swinish affections? If our natural enmity to God, as governor of the world, hinders us from complying with his kindness, yet self-preservation should make us fear and endeavour to avoid his wrath; and no folly like that, to prefer our enmity to another before the security of ourselves. It is an unreasonable folly, and insensibleness, not to come up fully to the terms of that religion we expect salvation only by.

3. A believer must be infallibly happy, if an unbeliever be infallibly miserable. The same word that assures the deplorable state of the one, assures the blessed estate of the other. The remission which was conditional in the declaration, is upon faith made absolute, because the condition is performed; what was proffered to all upon the condition of believing, if you believe, you shall have eternal life, is made absolute upon believing, if you believe, therefore you have eternal life. If the faith of believers under the Old Testament were saving in that obscurity, our faith under a clearer light, and more certain manifestation, must be much more saving. Salvation is as much the issue of faith by God's order, as damnation is the issue of unbelief; it is called, therefore, a 'believing to the saving of the soul,' Heb. x. 39. It takes hold of the mercy-seat, and hath both the veracity of God, and the pleas of Christ, to defend it, and keep its hands from being knocked off.

(1.) Is not that man happy who hath an union with Christ; who is transplanted from Adam, the condemned head by law, into Christ, the justified head both by law and grace? Shall a member of Christ perish any more than the head? or can the head be happy without the members? Was his natural body on'y concerned in that prophecy, that not a bone of him shall be broken? or shall his mystical body fare worse than that? Can hell ever be the dwelling-place of that which is the habitation of Christ? Eph. iii. 17. Shall wrath ever pierce into the intimate recesses where Christ resides? Shall the living waters which flow out of the belly, John vii. 38. (which is nothing but the Spirit received by believing), stream anywhere but to the ocean of blessedness? The fatness sucked from the olive-tree, Rom.

xi. 17, is not to render any combustible matter for wrath, but a preparation for glory. Oneness with Christ renders a believer in a manner as safe as Christ's righteousness doth himself; how can a believer miss of happiness, since by his union with Christ he is united to God, who is infinite blessedness in his nature, and the only felicity of his creature?

(2.) Is not he infallibly happy, who hath everything removed that may render him eternally miserable? Justice is stopped from any inundation upon such a person, since he answers the terms wherewith justice was satisfied. It would not longer retain the name of righteousness, if it acted so high a piece of unrighteousness as to deny its own agreement, and refuse the plea of that satisfaction it hath already accepted, and demand the debt Christ hath already paid. The tribunal of justice is to faith changed into a throne of grace, where justice and mercy sit both together, justifying and embracing a believer, Rom. iii. 26, for such Christ hath fixed a rainbow about the throne of God (as was elsewhere observed), an emblem of peace, Rev. iv. 3, to shew his mindfulness of the covenant when he comes to judge upon his throne. That whereby any son of Adam is condemned, is silent in regard of a believer. The law can no more plead its curses, against the blood of the Redeemer. Honey comes out of the belly of that lion instead of its fiery terrors, since Christ pronounced a freedom from guilt; for justification is at the instant of a sincere believing: John iii. 18, 'He that believes on him is not condemned.' *Is not*, in the present tense. He is not in a state of condemnation, therefore in a state of justification. Sin also (which is the corner-stone and foundation of hell) hath received a deadly wound, and is every day more feebly gasping; for believers 'walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,' and 'therefore there is no condemnation to them,' Rom. viii. 1. The venom of his nature is cured, as well as the guilt contracted by sin; the biting of the old serpent infected the blood of mankind with a serpentine venom, so that every man may in some sort be said to be the seed of the serpent; but by faith the guilt is not only taken away, whereby we become obnoxious to God, but the venom of our nature, which corrupted the mass of blood.

(3.) Is not he infallibly happy, whose person and services are accepted by God? Eph. i. 6. If faith in Christ makes any an amiable object of God's love, it must certainly make him a prepared subject for God's glory. How can God make a person eternally miserable, with whom he is well pleased? As justice cannot but thunder against an obstinate rebel, so mercy cannot but embrace a penitent and believing supplicant, who brings a righteousness before God, that pleaseth him infinitely more than the whole world. He that stands unblameable before God, by the righteousness of his Son, cannot be eternally miserable by his own sin. What tender father can condemn his own child? Such a relation doth faith make between God and the soul, by a double title, both of regeneration and adoption, John i. 12. Sonship is upon receiving of Christ, 'He that trusts in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about,' Ps. xxxii. 10. Mercy twines about every part of him.

(4.) Is not he infallibly happy, whom Christ, who is the Judge of the world, nether can nor will condemn? As he is not able, in regard to the unalterable method of God, to save an unbeliever, so he is not able, in regard of the same method, to condemn a believing person. The order of God is settled, and this is the rule of his proceeding; when he comes to judge, flaming vengeance is to be rendered to those 'that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,' 2 Thes. i. 8, neither of which characters a believer falls under. He is by covenant to justify men by the knowledge of himself, Isa. liii. 11, or by faith in himself; will Christ violate the cove-

nant of redemption so solemnly made? Would he proceed so far as to confirm it on his part by his death, to break it by his life? walk according to the articles of it when he was in the flesh, and defeat it when he was upon the throne? He cannot but be as willing to bestow mercy upon earth, now he is in heaven, as he was when he was upon the earth; and his language was then, 'Be it unto you according to your faith;' not only let that disease be removed, or that mercy granted, but intimating by that general grant the established order of his Father, that faith should not be denied the highest blessings that can be given.

(5.) Is not he infallibly happy whom God cannot condemn, neither in regard of his truth, nor in regard of the honour of Christ? Not in regard of his truth, since all the promises in the book of God belong to believers, because they are 'yea and amen' in Christ their head. God hath spoke it, and will never repent of what hath passed from his lips: Ps. ii. 12, 'Blessed are all they that put their trust in him,' *i. e.* in his Son; and God wants no more a faithfulness to make good his word, than he wanted mercy to pass his word. His truth, which was before on the side of justice, is now second to his grace, and stands as firm to make good the evangelical promise to him that performs the condition, as it is engaged to make good the legal and evangelical threatenings upon them that want it. He puts the interest of men in the hands of Christ, 'that the promise might be sure to all the seed,' Rom. iv. 16. Nor in regard of the honour of Christ: if God cannot save an unbeliever, who crosses the ends of Christ's death, without disparaging the undertaking of his Son, he cannot, according to his eternal order, destroy a believer, who answers the ends of it, without the same reflection. It would not be a just dealing with him in the rights of his purchase, to refuse the benefit of it to those that answer the conditions of enjoying it, and place the sheep that hear his voice in the same calamity with the dogs that snarl at him. Shall the blood of his Son be shed for the 'gathering together the sons of God,' John xi. 52, and not sprinkled on them? God is more in love with the person of his Son, and more pleased with the blood of his Son, than to cast a dishonour upon the one or the other. The honour of God is as much concerned in saving every soul that bathes itself in the blood of the Redeemer, as in condemning every one that tramples upon it.

(6.) Is it possible that he should be miserable, who designs and endeavours to glorify God according to his own direction? How can we glorify God but by faith, since man by his fall had made himself unfit to glorify him any other way? This honours God more than Adam could, had he stood in innocency, who could never have returned God an higher honour of his perfections, than he could have gleaned and collected from the creature; whereas this owns him in his glorious manifestation in his Son, and returns him an acknowledgment of the more glorious expense of his grace, and fuller display of his excellency. He that trusts in Christ, is 'to the praise of the glory of God,' Eph. i. 12. Is it possible God should put that soul to the greatest misery, that endeavours to bring him the greatest glory? Faith kills the enmity in the heart towards God, and shall a God of infinite love, who inspired the believer with all the faith and love he hath, cherish enmity in his breast against one that lodgeth him in his dearest affections, and destroy his own production? Who can imagine that a God of infinite goodness should be behind-hand with his creature in affections?

Well then, the salvation of a believer stands firm; hell and wrath shall not touch those that are anointed with the blood of Christ, and sheltered in so inviolable a sanctuary. Adam might sooner have been condemned in his innocent estate, than a Christian in a believing state, since God hath, besides

a single word, laid upon himself great obligations by frequent repetitions of his promise by all the prophets, Acts x. 43, and besides hath confirmed it by the blood of his Son. Again, as the punishment of an unbelieving rebel is as unavoidable as the punishment of Christ, after he entered himself as an undertaker for us, so the salvation of a penitent believer is as certain as the acceptance of Christ, after he performed what as a surety he undertook for. He hath unlocked the gates of heaven, that were shut till the shedding of his blood. The angel's sword that guarded paradise, turns every way to let the believer in, as it turned every way before to keep a rebel out from the tree of life. The veil of the temple was rent in twain by the force of the cross, whereby there was a view of the holy of holies. A believer hath a prospect of heaven while he lives, and an entrance into it when he dies; it is 'through his name,' if we believe in him, that 'we receive remission of sins,' Acts x. 43; he that hath remission cannot lie under damnation.

Use 4, is of exhortation. Be sensible of it.

1. Be sensible of the misery. Let every unbeliever consider that he hath the character of a condemned person upon him, for without faith Christ speaks no more comfort than the thunders of the law, but more terror than all the curses of that can speak. The text speaks it plain: 'He shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides upon him;' *pœna damni*, in the first, *pœna sensus*, in the second; there is a God of life, a heaven a place of life, but he shall never see the face of God with comfort, or enjoy the satisfactions of heaven. The deprivation of the heavenly Canaan, when a man comes to understand it, must much more affect the soul, than the deprivation of the earthly Canaan affected Moses. How sad will it be to be hurled from a pinnacle of prosperity, to a dunghill of poverty in a moment! What do you think were the sentiments of Adam, when on the sudden he found himself fallen from a serene state into a sea of horrors? Such will be the thoughts of men, when they see themselves cast from heaven for want of faith, who before seemed to be in the suburbs of it by an external profession. Men are naturally now secure, and have rather a faith in their own hearts, than a faith in Christ, and cry Peace, in spite of God, who proclaims a curse: Deut. xxix. 19, 'Bless himself in his heart.' But with what rage will conscience at length lash and spring up a perpetual hell within them, that will condemn upon a deathbed, as God's viceroy, and God at last condemn as the supreme governor; that will ten thousand times more gnaw an unbeliever for his infidelity, than the worst heathen for all his other sins. The nearer a man is to happiness, the more afflicting is the loss of it, and the more tormenting when it is for a vile and an unlovely lust. How I am expelled from the presence of God, who lately had a door opened to it, by the blood of the Redeemer! Justice locked not the door of heaven upon me, till I turned my back upon it, and pulled it after me. That which might have made me as happy as an angel, I refused wilfully, to make myself as miserable as a devil. This will be the sad lamentation of a man obstinate under the preaching of the gospel. How great will the misery be, when justice shall plead the dishonour of God, and mercy charge thee with the abuses of his grace! When all the attributes of God shall pursue him, whom a little before they waited to receive; when Christ, who would have been a stone of building, shall be a stone of bruising, and shall crush by his wrath those that would not be wooed by his mercy; when he shall appear in the majesty of a judge, he will cut the hearts of those that despised him in the quality of a Saviour. Those that have been only under nature's light, without the least twinkling of the gospel, will be, in comparison of such, in a state of innocency, and under a more easy damnation. As Christ shed

not his blood in vain, was not exalted in vain, pleads not in heaven in vain, so he is not entrusted with a power in vain; 'all power is given him in heaven and earth,' in pursuance of the gospel, upon which he founds the commission of the apostles, and assures them of his assistance in their work, Mat. xxviii. 18, 19, either for the happiness of the entertainers, or the misery of the neglecters; to break in pieces by his rod those that will not bow down to his sceptre: for in refusing ourselves the happiness of salvation, we refuse Christ the glory of his death and the honour of his authority. And consider, the more Christ is resisted, the deeper will the condemnation be. When we find Cain sinking under the load of the blood of an innocent person, murdered by him once, and see men whose hands have been imbrued in the blood of wicked wretches, to be in hell alive, when their consciences are awakened to a consideration of their guilt; what will it be then to be many a time, as by every act of infidelity, guilty of the blood of Christ? Nothing but woe can remain for that man, who hath the blood of Christ, so highly valued by God, pleading against him; it is greater than all the misery which can happen in this life. If we are sick, sickness is but a deprivation of health; if poor, the poverty is but the deprivation of wealth; but if unbelievers, we deprive ourselves of God, and of ourselves: the good we lose by it is a greater good than we can lose by any worldly misery. We offer the highest violence to ourselves, and reject the true felicity of our nature, by refusing an adherency to God as the chiefest good, and to Christ as the only way to the fruition of him. Faith only kept David's heart from fainting, Ps. xxvii. 13. Unbelief, then, can be no cordial for any in a dying hour; since by refusing a Saviour he makes himself utterly incapable of salvation.

2. Be sensible of the equity and justice of this misery. We can never be affected with any pronounced woes, unless we first judge God just; and truly the punishment is as deeply merited at the hands of God, as his kindness in his Son was undeserved by us. If justice might equitably punish men for breaking the laws of the Creator, it might much more punish them for slighting the overtures of an appeasable Creator, and the performances of an appealing Redeemer; and what is more reasonable than to have that inflicted upon men, which was inflicted upon the Saviour they make so light of!

(1.) There is no want on Christ's part. There hath been by him satisfaction enough for the payment of our debts, and merit enough for our restoration to our happiness. He hath done all things necessary for the salvation of the world: he hath expiated sin, which plunged it into misery; he hath presented his death to God as a sacrifice of infinite value, sufficient for all the world, and by opening the throne of grace, hath given liberty to approach to God, and solicit him for the application of the benefit he hath purchased; he hath also purchased the Spirit, sent him into the world to renew his solicitations to men, who seriously calls them to the partaking of this salvation, and declares it to be a thing very agreeable to him, that men should come in to him. He came not intentionally to condemn any man: John iii. 13, 'For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved;' to proclaim the riches of the grace of God for the salvation of men.* But in regard of the event, indeed he is their judge, to which men provoke him by their obstinacy; whence it is said, John ix. 39, that he came 'to judge the world,' *i. e.* in regard of the event. As the intention of a physician in prescribing sovereign medicines for the mastering the disease is to heal the patient; but if the patient neglects those restoratives, and swallows poison in their stead, this

* Tarnov. in loc. p. 311.

is not the physician's, but the patient's fault. The title of our Lord Jesus in his first coming was Saviour, not Judge; he presented men with that which might warrant them from condemnation; but if they will not rejoice in their happiness, they exclude themselves from the benefit; and by not embracing the ransom God hath provided, they expose themselves to pay that satisfaction in their persons which the law exacts. The satisfaction of Christ they cannot plead, because the conditions of it are not embraced; they must therefore pay what the law demands, which would else be insignificant, and the honour of God's justice would suffer in their safety. When, therefore, every offer of mercy shall accompany men to the tribunal of the judge, and this charge be heard from his mouth: * I have redeemed you by my blood, and you have trod it under foot; I have invited you to faith and repentance, but you would rather wallow in the excrements of sin; I have called you by the motions of my Spirit, and you have proved rebellious; I have encouraged you by promises of great reward, but you made no account of them; wherein have I been wanting? With what face can any man now lay the fault upon God? As when a king proclaims pardon to a rebellious city, upon the condition that they yield up themselves to his son; as it is equity that those that surrender themselves should have the promised benefit, so it is just that those that wilfully resist so easy and reasonable a condition, should fall under the threatened penalty; they have no reason to charge their ruin upon any want of clemency in the king, since the proffer was made to all, but upon their own obstinacy, because they perish by their own folly.

(2.) No want of evidence and declaration of the salvation purchased. If there were not sufficient arguments to work upon men's understandings, nor persuasive motives to induce their wills to embrace it; if there were not a demonstration of an invincible necessity of their belief, their condemnation for infidelity would not appear to be just. But there is sufficient evidence; 'light is come into the world,' and hath exposed to the view of men the treasures of grace and glory, the most alluring motives to prevail upon their wills; but their affections carry them to error and darkness, upon which the Scripture lays the cause of men's condemnation, John iii. 19, and calls it a self-judgment: Acts xiii. 46, 'You judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life.' Ignorance sometimes excuseth,† either when the things we are ignorant of we are not bound to know, as what is the just magnitude of the sun; or when they are not sufficiently revealed, as who Melchisedec was; but when that which concerns our clear duty, and choicest happiness, is with a full evidence of truth set clearly before our eyes, is it not our own fault if we regard them not? Such an ignorance is affected and voluntary, and leaves a man in judgment without excuse; and is so far from diminishing the fault, that it rather aggravates it. Why are any ignorant, when the doctrines of the gospel have been represented to them, and it was their undeniable duty to know and receive them? If the sun shines upon the world, and discovers the treasures of the creation; if men will shut their eyes, and will not behold them, is that the fault of the sun, or of the men?

(3.) It is a voluntary and wilful refusal, and therefore a consent to the punishment. Unbelievers are excluded from heaven, and locked up in misery by their own consent; not formal and explicit, but virtual and implicit. They voluntarily neglect the performance of those conditions upon which a right to heaven is founded, and willingly continue in that state which subjects them to eternal misery. Whosoever refuseth the conditions, refuseth by that act the privileges which depend upon those conditions. He that will

* Pont. Meditat. part i. medit. 14, p. 94.

† Dailé sur Jean iii. serm. x. p. 89, &c.

not pay a pepper-corn per annum for an estate of a considerable value, when it is all the rent demanded, wilfully deprives himself of the right of tenancy. He that will not sue out the pardon of his crimes upon easy conditions enjoined him, deprives himself of the benefit of the prince's proclamation, and justly perisheth, because, as the conditions are the fruits of the greatest mercy in the prince, so the refusal is a demonstration of the greatest hatred in the rebel. Those that choose to gratify Satan in his triumphs over them, rather than please Christ who hath bled for them, perish by their own wilfulness. The Scripture chargeth it upon this score : Christ would gather men, but 'they will not,' Mat. xxiii. 37, 38 ; God doth not destroy Israel, but Israel 'destroys himself,' Hos. xiii. 9. The Holy Ghost, in the close of the canon of the Scripture, lays it there : Rev. xxii. 17, 'Whosoever will, let him take of the waters of life freely.' If any man will, he may have it ; if he hath it not, it is because he doth not will it ; and he that doth not will it, doth consequently will the waters of death ; and what is more reasonable, than that those who will not accept of a tendered salvation should not enjoy it ? The whole design of Scripture is to publish God's willingness to impart the fruits of the death of Christ, and upon the close the Holy Ghost puts the question, whether they will partake of them or no. As much as to say, God hath discharged himself ; let men look to it, they will be found at last the wilful cause of their own ruin.

Obj. But we have no strength of our own to will ; God only gives faith.

Ans. God may urge us to believe ; we are bound to be obedient to whatsoever is his declared will, as a rule for our obedience. He gave Adam strength to believe whatsoever he revealed ; he is no more bound to repair that strength (but where he pleases) than he was bound to send Christ to redeem, after man by his revolt had plunged himself in misery. He may require of man the honour due to him, and is bound to bestow no more upon man than man can challenge as his due. It is true, when God would create a rational creature, the holiness of his nature doth oblige him to create him holy ; but his holiness doth not oblige him to repair man, who hath forfeited all to justice, and had his blessings seized into the hands of his offended Lord. God is not therefore bound to turn every man's, or any man's will. Yet the refusal of God's gracious tenders is in every unbeliever wilful, because he makes not use of that strength which was left in him, after the fall, by the mediation of Christ. There is indeed an utter impotency in man as fallen ; you find no footstep of one good thought, one good inclination, in Adam after his fall ; he had no mind to approach to God to implore his mercy. Instead of confessing his sin, he palliates it, Gen. iii. 9-12. Conscience forceth him to acknowledge it ; not to charge himself humbly, but to discharge himself upon God ; he mentions not the name of God with any respect in all that discourse. Thus man considered in Adam, purely as fallen, hath not one thought morally good ; so that the apostle might well say, that 'we are insufficient of ourselves to think a good thought,' 2 Cor. iii. 5. But there is some restored power by the interposition of Christ, as he is 'the light that enlightens every man that comes into the world,' John i. 9 ; whereby he may have some thoughts and inclinations materially good, if he will follow the conduct of that common light ; he hath a faculty to think of what God reveals ; he hath sometimes some kind of velleities, but he doth not improve and pursue them. He puts by those things when they are represented to him by the Spirit of God ; he cannot endure to have his thoughts dwell upon them, and is unwilling to direct his affections and inclinations to a divine object. The corrupt habits in his will wholly sway him another way. If a man were willing, and God unwilling ; if he did

seriously seek God, and call upon him (as he might direct his cries to God, as well as to creatures), and God had said, he would give him no share in Christ, then man had reason to complain. But it may be truly said, that no man at the day of judgment can, with a full witness of conscience, say, Lord, I have sought thee to the utmost of that power thou didst vouchsafe to me after the fall. I would have believed in Christ; I prayed for faith with strong cries and tears; many a time I went to ordinances with a desire and hopes to have it bestowed upon me; I have waited at thy gates for the moving of the Spirit upon the waters of my soul; I have grieved that I have not been seized by him, and thou wouldst not bestow faith upon me: can we think any man can say so at the last day? Without question, no unbeliever can have that plea; his own conscience will fall in with the judge, and charge his unbelief upon a *would not*.

(4.) This voluntary refusal is out of affection to some unworthy lust. And this reason clears the equity of God's justice in their punishment. If Tories and robbers will not accept of a pardon, because they would live idly by their rapine, and pilfering their neighbours, rather than content themselves with some honest employment, they increase by such a carriage the equity of that justice which shall be armed against them. This is the case, John iii. 19, 'men love darkness;' they will not believe, because they will not be hindered from breaking the divine law without any regret. No question but many would receive the gospel for the benefit of remission which it offers, but not for the mortification of the old man with its lusts, which it enjoins. A true believer rejoiceth in the benefit of pardon by the gospel, and tastes the sweetness of that doctrine, but embraceth it as well for the renewing grace of it, for the unloosing his chains, changing his spiritual death into a spiritual life, and an heart imprinted by sin into an heart engraven with a new law; for he embraceth Christ for the main ends of his death, which were a restoration of the holiness as well as the happiness of nature; to 'purify a peculiar people to himself, zealous of good works,' as well as to 'redeem them from all iniquity,' Titus ii. 14. The unbeliever is quite contrary, and neglects a Saviour because he would retain his sin; he would be willing to have Christ for a pardon, but without a yoke. But doth not such a frame put an end to all disputes against the equity of God's justice? Is it just that he that will not have a restoration of God's image should have a restoration to the felicity of paradise, to live for ever with the original? Or that he should be exempted from the misery due to his sin, who would retain his violent inclinations against the honour of God, and practically declare he would rather lose all the fruits of the blood of God than the pleasures of sin? And will not the consciences of many men charge them with this at the last day, and force them to say, Lord, I had some apprehensions of the truth of thy word, and the necessity of Christ, yet I was loath to forsake a beloved Delilah for them. I was willing to believe in him for salvation, but not to conform to him in obedience; fleshly and spiritual lusts engrossed my will, which should have been inclined to thee.

(5.) The dignity and peculiar design of the person proposed clears the justice of the punishment. The Son of God, and his design peculiar for man. If a prince should take a great journey to deliver a galley-slave from his fetters, and he refuse acceptance, would not all men judge him worthy of the chains he loves? Or if a king should go a thousand miles in much hardship to court a nasty beggar, and receive a refusal, would not all men count her worthy of perpetual rags and sordidness? The case is the same here. The design of Christ was peculiar for man: devils are excluded. A reward was promised him: pardon and justification was promised as a re-

ward to him, which he, being innocent in his own person, was not capable of, and therefore was peculiarly intended as a gift to man.

Let every man, then, in an unbelieving state, be sensible of the equity of this misery he exposeth himself unto. Be sensible that Christ hath not been wanting; that there is sufficient revelation of the will and kindness of God, that your refusal of him is voluntary and wilful, and with the greatest indignity, undervaluing him by low and base affections, and such a person who is of infinite dignity, and intended his kindness peculiar for man; and therefore he that will wilfully refuse so rich a sacrifice of God's provision for the satisfaction of his own justice, cannot but acknowledge it reasonable to be made a sacrifice himself to that justice he hath offended. An eternal misery is merited by him who rejects a God of infinite goodness, a Christ of infinite value, and an heaven of infinite duration.

3. Let your sense of unbelief rise up to a detestation of it, and a labouring after faith. Why should God be kept out of the exercise of his sovereignty, and Christ hindered from the rights of his purchase? Why should not the Redeemer have the things that belong to him, since he hath 'bought us with a price'? 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. Put not off the seasons of grace. Let us not harden our hearts against the offers of mercy, lest we come short of the promise, as they did to whom the gospel was preached in types, because they mixed not the word with faith; they looked upon the typical part, and looked not beyond it to the thing signified, Heb. iv. 1, 2. If they entered not into rest because they believed not a gospel in types, how shall we be admitted into rest, if we believe not a gospel in substance, stripped of the obscuring shadows? As there was no remission unless Christ had shed his blood, so there is no participation of that blood without applying it by faith. It is to this the Spirit presseth us: it is a pity to resist so comfortable a solicitor. Can we behold a Saviour bleeding upon the cross for our security, and not give him the small honour of the faith he requires? Christ as crucified doth not save us, but Christ as believed on. Though the fire hath a warming property, yet we must approach to it if we will partake of its heat. Though a medicine hath an healing virtue, yet it is not healing as it is in the glass, but as received in the stomach. We partake not of Adam's contagion but by natural generation; we partake not of Christ's holiness but by spiritual regeneration, the form whereof is faith. Without faith we continue under the power of Satan. There are but two kingdoms, the kingdom of darkness, and the kingdom of Christ, Col. i. 13. Unbelief subjects us to the one, and faith estates us in the other. If faith quencheth the fiery darts of Satan, Eph. vi. 16, unbelief exposeth us as a mark to every arrow. The longer any man continues in unbelief, the more unfit will he be for faith. The natural hardness will grow into judicial, and the stone we bring with us into the world more rocky, more insensible of the strokes of the law, or the balsam of the gospel. As walking unworthy of the light of nature provokes God to give men up to a sensual brutishness, Rom. i. 21, so opposing the light of the gospel provokes God to give men up to a spiritual devilishness. The more spiritual the discovery of grace, the more spiritual are the judgments upon neglect. No duties are acceptable without faith. It is as impossible to please God by the humblest devotions without faith, as it is to get to heaven by the most soaring righteousness without Christ. God smiles upon nothing unless offered to him in the name of his Son, Col. iii. 17; and who can offer anything in his name that hath not faith in his blood? Without Christ we can do nothing, John xv. 5; without union to him, which is only caused by faith, whole heaps of sacrifices are cyphers, and amount to just nothing. God did not enjoin

Adam prayer, confession of sin, and sacrifices at the first meeting after the fall, till he had uttered the promise of a Mediator as the object of faith, whence all those other duties were to flow, which were natural to him in a state of innocence, or instituted with a particular respect to the Mediator, and present state of Adam. Faith was to be the ground of his obedience; for, having by his apostasy rendered himself unable to obey any, he must first believe, that he might have a new strength, and a new principle of obedience to other commands; which evidenceth the vanity of those men that depend upon a self-righteousness, and a formal set of duties, without regarding the Mediator of God's appointing. No duty acceptable without faith. Faith rendered Abel's sacrifice more excellent than Cain's, and made it accepted, while unbelief rendered the other fruitless. Miseries attend this state in this life, which prepare for the miseries of a future. Let us, therefore, embrace the grace of the golden sceptre, lest we be crushed by the weight of the iron rod, and kiss the Son, lest we feel his wrath. 'He that believes on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believes not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.'

A DISCOURSE SHEWING WHO ARE UNBELIEVERS.

But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.—JOHN VI. 64.

AFTER Christ had discoursed of the necessity and advantages of faith in him, whereby a right to eternal life is acquired, ver. 47, he declares himself to be the bread of life, more excellent than the manna their fathers ate in the wilderness, which was not able to secure them from the invasion of death.* But 'this,' saith he, 'is the bread which came down from heaven,' ver. 50, as if he had pointed to his own body in the speaking those words; and not only the 'living bread,' that have life in myself, but the enlivening bread, 'which came down from heaven to give life' to the sons of men, ver. 51, and this bread is 'my flesh; which I will give for the life of the world;' when this flesh shall suffer and become a sacrifice to God, if it be eaten by faith; it shall be capable to communicate life to as many as do so. But the Jews who heard him, had carnal conceptions of this discourse of our Saviour, and raised matter of scandal from that which should have been a ground of their faith: ver. 52, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' How can the eating the flesh of a man be a thing agreeable to God, and an efficacious means to gain eternal life? Christ then perceiving their hardness, and ignorance, and their misinterpretations of his speech, understanding that of an oral eating which they might by his former discourse have understood figuratively of believing in him, he doth more positively assert what he had spoken before, and that by a strong asseveration, which some think to be in the nature of an oath among the Jews: ver. 53, 'Verily, verily I say unto you, Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you.' It is an undoubted truth, that I am only able to give you life; and besides, if you believe not in me, it is impossible that ever you should have any life in you; but if you do believe, eat my flesh and drink my blood, by, or in believing, whosoever he be, of what quality and condition soever, he 'shall have eternal life; and to this end, that he may completely enjoy it, 'I will raise him up at the last day' from the dead; for whatsoever your fathers did before eat or drink, manna, and the water from

* Amyraut. in loc. through all the verses.

the rock, was neither meat nor drink indeed, but types of me, of my flesh and blood, which is the true meat, and the true drink to enliven you, and preserve you in life; and, you know, the food you eat, and the drink you drink, are united to your bodies, so as to become a part of yourselves, yet not so perfectly but there is a decay again, so that there remains nothing of that nourishment you have took before, but other must succeed in the room to keep up your bodies in good plight; but the meat and drink which I give are of another kind, for they are the cause of an inseparable union, and inviolable communion: ver. 56, 'He that eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, dwells in me, and I in him.' Natural food, not remaining always in the body, doth not preserve without fresh meals; but this meat continues in its force and vigour perpetually, uniting the soul to me, and me to it. The source of this life is in the Father, who hath communicated a power to me, to enliven those that have communion with me; so that if any one believe in me, he shall live by me, because the spring of life in the Father is communicated to me as the Head, and by me conveyed to all those that are members of me by faith. We are united by faith to Christ, and therefore not united to him as God, or as God-man, but as God-man crucified and risen again for us, ver. 56. And though you have a great opinion of the manna God sent down to your fathers, and it was indeed a great miracle, and mercy, and a confirmation of the ministry of Moses, yet you can take no great pleasure in that, since those to whom it was particularly communicated were not preserved from death, and did not live for ever, which this bread I spake to you of will certainly effect in you, ver. 57. 'These things,' saith the evangelist, 'he spake in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum,' ver. 59, publicly, and in the midst of his enemies, declaring thereby his power, that he knew, when he pleased, how to repress the violence of his adversaries, and restrain their fury from breaking out against him, ver. 60. Now, after Christ had spoken these things, the multitude were so far from being satisfied, that even some of his disciples, who had before heard him in other discourses with much contentment, are offended at this as a strange discourse. They could not conceive how the flesh of Christ could be eaten, and his blood drank,* since the law forbade them to drink the blood of any creature; nor how his body, if sliced into many pieces, could satisfy so great a multitude that were desirous of eternal life; nor could any conceive that his body was better than manna, whereof the Scripture speaks so highly; and which way soever their reasons turned, they could not conceive the meaning of Christ's words, and therefore said, 'This is a hard saying;† it is incredible, no sober ear can endure such discourses as these, or yield any assent thereunto. And though, out of some veneration of Christ, they did speak this publicly, and enter into a dispute with him about this argument, yet Christ, who knew the motions of their hearts, and what thoughts they had of his discourse, obviates this offence, remitting them to his resurrection and glorification: ver. 62, 'What and if you shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?' and asserting his own deity. The import of it is this,‡ Have you such carnal conceits of my discourse, as to understand the eating my flesh, and drinking my blood, of an oral eating? When you shall see that this flesh shall ascend to heaven, you will see your error, and find it impossible to chew my flesh with your teeth; and then you will understand, that that which you conceive was not my meaning, but that it is to be meant of a spiritual eating and drinking, *i. e.* in believing; and therefore be not troubled at this distance of my body from you at that time, for if you believe, I shall still make good my word and promise of life to you, for it is the

* Ferus. in loc.

† Brugens in loc.

‡ Amyraut. in loc.

Spirit whom I shall send after my ascension into heaven, who shall communicate this life to you, by sanctifying and purging you: ver. 63, 'It is the Spirit that quickens; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak to you, they are spirit, and they are life.' Should you eat my flesh in that manner which you weakly imagine, it would profit you nothing, neither for the comfort of your souls, nor resurrection of your bodies; you therefore very much abuse me, and abuse yourselves, to put such a construction upon my words, for 'the words I speak are spirit and life'; they are spiritual, and ought to be understood spiritually, and he that receiveth them in a spiritual manner, will find them to be the means of life, and assurance of life to him, and a continual seed and principle of eternal life in him. But it is to little purpose that I should thus comment upon and explain what I have said, since 'there are some of you that do not believe,' and will not believe in whatsoever manner the doctrine of the gospel should be proposed to you, ver. 64. Upon which the evangelist adds a remark and observation of his own concerning the deity of Christ, that being his principal scope in writing this Gospel, which appears to be his purpose in the beginning of his discourse, chap. i., and therefore he records those speeches of Christ, wherein his deity is plainly asserted or implied; and upon several occasions in the whole book, points us to those things which may manifest the truth of it, whereof this is one.

Observe,

1. How blind is man naturally in the things of God! How hard is it for us to understand spiritual truths, not by reason of their obscurity, but our own corruption, wherewith the eyes of our minds are blinded, and our understandings darkened! Had an heathen understood the discourse of Christ in this manner, he had been more excusable than those Jews that were taught from heaven, had the Messiah been wrapt up in their types, might have learned something of him by the paschal lamb, the ceremonies whereof might have informed them of this doctrine. The lamb signified Christ, the killing it signified the death of Christ, the eating of it signified faith in his blood, and thereby a participation of him, and conjunction with him; but they being bewitched with an opinion of a worldly grandeur, neither regarded the type of him in the lamb, nor the discourses he frequently made to them. How few of the Jews understood the meaning of the types of the Messiah; nay, how little can we give a full account of the analogy between the type and the antitype, since they have both met together!

2. How apt are we to have carnal imaginations of spiritual things, and look upon the word of God with false optics! What reason had those people to imagine that our Saviour, whom they saw without spot, whose actions manifested his tenderness and kindness, who was an exact observer of the law, should preach a necessity of their being cannibals and man-eaters, and propose to them the drinking the blood of a man, when the blood of any creature was forbidden in the law to be swallowed by them, and which none but the most barbarous nations have ever practised! What need of prayer and importunity for the Spirit, and diligent inquiry, to make us have right notions of the words of God! The Spirit quickens, the light of the Spirit is only efficacious to give us an understanding of the gospel.

3. The deity of Christ is here asserted; thrice in the space of four verses: ver. 61, 'Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it.' He never heard their voice, nor was informed by the report of others; he knew it by the divine nature communicating that knowledge to his humanity: 'He needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man,' John ii. 25. He did not only know that the Jews, which were his enemies, were

offended, but that his disciples murmured at it ; he knew the motions of the hearts of his open enemies, and his unbelieving followers ; not the heart of any in the multitude was locked up from his notice ; he knew it in and by himself, not by another. And ver. 62, ' The Son of man ascends up where he was before ; ' he was in heaven before his incarnation, he therefore had an existence before his incarnation ; he ascended into heaven in his humanity, where he was before in his divinity. Christ God-man is one person ; the Son of God and the Son of man is one Christ,* in regard of the unity of the persons ; he tells us, while he spake on earth, he is in heaven, John iii. 13, the Son of God on earth *in susceptâ carne*, the Son of man in heaven *in unitate personæ* ; he was in the earth, yet in heaven at the same time. If he were a creature, it were not possible that he could be in two places at one and the same time. Every creature hath a limited essence, and a limited place, he cannot be in it and out of it at the same time. If he be on earth and in heaven at the same time, it is certain that he is God, of an infinite essence, and by consequence eternal ; † since the reason of time is the same with that of place, an infinite nature can no more be bounded by time, than it can be limited by place. If he were before in heaven, it could not be in his flesh that he took of the virgin, he could not be existent in flesh before he had flesh ; he had no flesh but from the virgin, for he was ' made of a woman,' Gal. iv. 4. It must be then in another nature, wherein he was existent in heaven before he was incarnate on earth. There is no other nature but the divine, angelical, and human : angelical nature he had not, that nature he took not, therefore was not of it, Heb. ii. 16 ; the human nature he assumed at the time of the standing of the Jewish temple. It must be by the divine nature then wherein he was in heaven before. A third testimony there is in the text, ' for Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.' From the beginning, *i. e. ab æterno*, saith Ferus. He did so, indeed, as God ; or from the beginning, *i. e. ab initio conversationis discipulorum* : Luke i. 2, ' As they delivered them to us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses,' so Brugensis, from the beginning of any one's following him ; his divine nature communicated to his humanity their sentiments and secret opinions of him. The knowledge of thoughts is a perfection peculiar to the Deity ; man may conjecture, God only knows them. He knew also who should betray him, when Judas had not then the least thought of such an action, or any intention to it ; ‡ nor doth it appear that he had that design, till the high priests had discovered their resolution for his death ; yet Christ knew before that he should do it, before Judas knew that he would do it, as he knew Peter's denial of him before ever Peter thought of such a thing, and predicted it to Peter, when Peter was resolved against it ; when Christ foretold it to him, then it was, ' I will not deny thee, though I should die with thee,' Mat. xxvi. 35. But afterwards, his speech, ' I know not the man,' verified the certainty of Christ's foreknowledge.

There are some of you that believe not. He brings upon the stage the true reason of that offence they had taken at his words. He charges not their ignorance, but their unbelief. He doth not say, there are some of you that understand not, but he dives into the cause of their dulness, they did not believe. The fountain of the wrong notions men have of the word, is their want of faith. And this he speaks to his disciples ; many of them murmured at him for this discourse : ver. 60, ' many of his disciples.' They might join themselves to Christ upon many motives, either because of the greatness of his miracles, expectation of preferment from him in his temporal kingdom

* Austin in loc.

† Daillé sur Jean iii. 13.

‡ Muscul. in loc.

they looked for, out of the desire of novelty, a natural curiosity, perhaps from a weariness of the legal discipline, or for gain, as Judas did. Some kind of faith or profession they had, for they were disciples. But when the unbelief is greater than the assent, such a faith is esteemed as nothing ; * it is a faith that will be easily laid aside upon a small occasion, and another profession taken up in the room of it, as they did, ver. 66, 'many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him ;' and though they did follow him for a time, yet all that time of their following him, they had the principle of apostasy in their unbelief, though it broke not out into act.

The observation that I shall handle, lies plain in the words.

Doctrine. Many under the preaching of the word, and that seem to be professors, are real unbelievers. There may be a professed assent, when there is not a firm one, or at least a full consent ; a painted faith, without any sound persuasion of the truth of those things in the heart. Many stand idle in the market, and gaze upon the commodities Christ sets to sale, but open not their hearts to receive the treasures that are opened to them. That prophecy concerning the miserable reception he hath in the world, is of a standing and lasting truth to this day, that 'there is no beauty in him that we should desire him,' that the faces of men are hid from him, that he is despised and not esteemed, Isa. liii. 2, 3. It was verified in our Saviour's time, John xii. 37, 38, and is not ended in ours. There is a secret unbelief in the hearts of men, which is not expressed with their tongues, but writ in their actions : Luke vii. 30, 'They rejected the counsel of God against themselves.' Calvin takes *εις* for *εν*, *in* themselves ; there was not an open declamation against John's baptism, but a secret dislike of it by an inward pride swelling up in their minds. There are not only many dead stakes in the hedge, but some flowers upon the hedge, which are not part of the garden, or transplanted into it, as their proper soil. Those that have the deepest engagements to God, are often the greatest rejecters of Christ. There was not a nation which owned in their worship the unity of God, but the Jews. No nation expected and longed for the redemption by the Messiah but they. No nation had the promises of him but they ; they had more particular obligations to Christ than any : they were his own, John i. 11, they were conducted by him through the wilderness, were entrusted with his oracles, heard his word, all other nations were in regard of them none of Christ's. The whole world indeed belonged to him by the right of creation and government ; but in regard they had not such particular obligations to him as the Jews, they are not here called his own. Yet those that longed for him, wished for his coming, instead of receiving him, with the greatest welcome, rejected him with the greatest spite ; as though he that came to redeem them, and perfect the kindness shewn to them in the first administration of the covenant with them, had designed nothing but their ruin. And so now Christ is more contemptible among his own than among strangers ; he is not so much wronged and slighted among heathens that have not known him, as among those to whom the gospel is preached.

I shall shew,

I. That it is so.

II. Who are they that are unbelievers.

III. The causes of this unbelief.

IV. The use.

I. That it is so. In this I shall consider unbelief in general ; not only as it is a non-acceptance of Christ, or a refusal of him, but as it is a denying

* Schlicting, in loc.

credit to any revelation of God; and therefore when it is generally granted that God doth make revelations of his will, and it was a notion owned by men naturally, and that men do not naturally comply fully with such revelations as from God, it is no wonder that men are so often found to be guilty of the refusals of Christ, since there is nothing in nature that can make any discovery of him, or assist our belief in him, the whole stream of nature being against it; yet whenever the Scripture speaks of unbelief, it intends this resistance of Christ in his person, or shadows representing him, or promises concerning him. But that many or multitudes under the word and common profession of Christianity are unbelievers is evident, because,

1. The Scripture always accounts the faithful but few. The Scripture mentions but two of Adam's race at one time, and one of them Cain, an unbeliever, and the head of the unbelieving world after; and in nine generations from Seth, the world was so corrupted, and God's Spirit so striven against by that generation, that he pronounceth of it that 'all flesh had corrupted their ways,' Gen. vi. 3, 12, and only Noah was found with whom he would establish his covenant, viz. that he should enter into the ark, and rely upon God in a way of faith and obedience, which was a type of the eternal security men have in Christ, the true ark. That covenant made with Adam in the promise of the seed of the woman, was rejected by the whole world, and there was none in the earth that owned it, and with whom God would establish it, but Noah. This was the covenant of grace under the shadow of the ark, as the sun under a cloud. It was for their unbelief in the Mediator that the old world was condemned to perish in the waters. For the great work of the Spirit of Christ, by which he preached to them in those days, 1 Peter iii. 18, 19, is against this sin. Christ hath not only suffered by the unbelief of men in these last times, but from the beginning. So that if his divinity had been as capable of suffering as his humanity, he had suffered by the violence of men in former ages, as well as in the latter; for the old world spared him not, but provoked him by their incredulity of his promise. Of six hundred thousand Israelites, there are but two expressly mentioned that believed in Christ, shadowed under the promise of entering into Canaan. It was their unbelief in Christ made them incapable of entering into rest, Heb. iii. 19, for the apostle discourseth there against unbelief in Christ, and brings the misery which fell upon their ancestors as a motive against it. A remnant only in the time of Ahab, in that populous nation; about seven thousand among a great multitude; for the ten tribes could not well be fewer than Judah and Benjamin, who were in one army one hundred and eighty thousand chosen men, 1 Kings xii. 21. And in the apostle's time the case was much the same, for which he cites this passage out of the Kings: Rom. xi. 4, 5, 'There is a remnant according to the election of grace,' *λεῖμμα*, a small piece out of a whole cloth. Christ is a stone of stumbling, a rock of offence, even to the house of Judah and Israel, the only church God had in the world, Isa. viii. 14, and believers so rare among them that they were as wonders and prodigies, which are not often seen, ver. 18. In the days of his flesh few believed in him. John Baptist affirms that 'no man receives his testimony,' John iii. 32; no man comparatively to those that refused him, the number of believers being as a few grains of a commodity scattered out of a scale. A few of the common people believed in him, and but one Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea of the higher sort. But the generality of the Jews, to whom both the promise and offer of the Messiah were made, are charged with unwillingness to come under his wing, Mat. xxiii. 37; with foolish excuses to absent themselves from his feast,

Luke xiv. 18; with a resolute resistance against his call, Mat. xxii. 8; and some that were very forward, and in general seemed to accept of all his terms, and to be content to do whatsoever he required, when it came to the push, did strike off and went away grieved, as the young man, Mark x. 17, 21. Judas professed and preached him, and had not a mite of faith in him; and some at the last shall plead their prophesying in his name, casting out devils, and doing many wondrous works in his name, who were never united to him by faith, nor shall ever reign with him in glory, Mat. vii. 22, 23. And when he comes at last, though there may be a fair harvest of professors, there will be a famine of faith, Luke xviii. 8.

2. Unbelief is natural to man, and therefore it is no wonder that many under the preaching of the gospel, and that seem to be professors, are unbelievers.

(1.) There is an enmity in nature to the grace of faith in Christ. Since in a state of nature men are in constant arms against God, they have no natural inclination to give credit to any revelation of God. Men do not usually believe their enemies, or trust them without a caution. Since we first left God, it is natural to us in all straits to have recourse to sensible objects; and because we once left him, we are loath to return to him, because our natural pride refuseth to charge ourselves with the folly of our first revolt. Man despiseth Christ: Isa. xlix. 7, 'Thus saith the Lord to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhors.' Man in his fallen estate would have a bottom of his own to stand upon; he is abhorred by the nation, *i. e.* by the nation of the Jews, called the nation as being more peculiarly under God's conduct, the nation to whom he was peculiarly sent; and therefore when Christ came, it is said there was no man, none to answer his call, Isa. l. 2, no man naturally. And this is not so much from a dulness of understanding as a natural disaffection. Since man can understand things that are abstruse, and with a liveliness search into those things which are pleasant to his nature, and easily believe them; his not believing the mysteries revealed by God is from the reluctancy of his nature against him, and unwillingness to acquaint himself with those things which may over-rule his sensuality and natural inclinations to pleasure. A man may sooner suffer for a truth of Christ than believe, because there may be many motives in corrupt nature to persuade a man to suffer for an opinion, as a repute of constancy, courage, an affectation of a fame (such a vanity as acted that person that burnt Diana's temple, that he might not be forgot in the world); yea, a man may in distrustfulness of God's providence be weary of his life, and be desirous in some creditable way to be stripped of it; but faith finds no assistance in nature. Pride can be no encouragement to it, as to suffering. It is a grace which wholly empties a man of himself, lays him in the dust, suffers not any ambition of a righteousness of his own, strips him of all his own excellency. Since pride is a man's darling in nature, everything that lays it low is abhorred by nature. There is as great an opposition between the heart of man and the mysteries of God, as there is between fire and water. Our resistance of the Spirit is natural, the Holy Ghost never overcomes without striving, Gen. vi. 3. The principle of the flesh opposeth that of the Spirit in a good man, much more in an unrenewed heart; nay, there is an enmity in the heart against the truth of Christ, because it is truth: John viii. 45, 'Because I tell you the truth, you believe me not.*' Not that men think that they hate the truth when they reject Christ, but they are led by an instinct of the devil, who is their father, and the father of lies, against the truth, as there is something in it that doth

* Muscul. in loc.

not please their natural affections. As those that are prone to contention cannot endure the counsels of peace, because they are the counsels of peace; and those that are given to drunkenness cannot endure admonitions to sobriety, because they tend to sobriety; so when men love lies by nature, and the power of the devil their father, they hate anything that tends to divine truth.

(2.) The attendants on faith are against the grain of nature; unbelief, therefore, and the attendants on it, are suitable to nature. No man is naturally willing to part with a dear member, a right eye, mortify carnal affections, deny his dearest self; nay, men are hardly brought to consider the things of faith, examine themselves about the nature of faith; they are drawn to the touchstone as hardly as a man to some sharp punishment. Who is naturally willing to crucify that which is incorporated with him, the flesh? to deny what is dearest to him, himself? If the apostle 'delighteth in the law of God after the inward man,' Rom. vii. 22, an unrenewed man by the rule of contraries delights in the law of sin after the inward man (sin hath the chief fort in his soul); and he that doth so is as unwilling to have it slain as to lop off one of his principal limbs, or fling his whole estate into the sea. Hence Christ pronounceth it hard for a rich man, or one that trusts in his riches, to enter into heaven, Mat. xix. 23, 24. We are naturally enemies to holiness, which is the fruit of faith, and therefore to the person of Christ, as holy, which cannot, because of his holiness, be embraced by one deeply in love with sin. The laws of Christ are too spiritual to be entertained by a carnal mind; his ways too strict to be trod by a loose spirit. The inward as well as the outward man must come under his sceptre; and this is a hard task, the stomach swells against it. The righteousness of Christ is a thing without us; it is counted a dishonour to us to be beggars at another's door for happiness; there must be a righteousness also within us, and against this the whole legion of devilish corruptions riseth up in arms. Not any part of the train belonging to faith that nature can look friendly upon; we are unlike God, and we naturally hate everything that would render us conformable to him.

(3.) Corrupt reason is an enemy to faith, and a friend to unbelief. The life of sense is the first life we live; after that a life of reason, which fore-stalls faith. Reason is the supreme principle in a man before faith gets footing; it manageth all the actions, and therefore opposes that which would impair part of its sovereignty. Therefore the oppositions that are made to the gospel are called reasonings against the knowledge of Christ, which are strongholds: 2 Cor. x. 4, 5, 'Pulling down strongholds, casting down imaginations' (*λογισμοὺς*, reasonings). Reason exalts itself, and will not submit to revelation, unless it finds marks upon it suitable to its own principles. Not that God doth impose upon men; but whenever he hath made a new revelation of his will, he hath attended it with signs and undeniable evidences that it was of divine authority. But after once it is manifest that the revelation itself is from God, the principles and doctrines delivered in it are not to be cited and tried at the bar of our reason. Yet as man sets his will against the law of God, so he lifts up his reason against the wisdom of God. As enmity to God in the will is as natural to man since the fall as the will, so contradicting reasonings against the knowledge of Christ are as natural as his understanding. As it is impossible a man can be a rational creature without understanding and will, so it is impossible he can be a carnal man without prejudices in his mind and dissatisfactions in his will against God: Rom. viii. 7, 'The carnal mind is enmity against God: it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' Unbelief, therefore, is natural to

man. Therefore, when God subdues the soul to the obedience of faith, it is in a way of conquest, captivating the reasonings and thoughts of the mind to Christ. Besides, reason is the excellency and glory of man: the more rational men are, the more they are in esteem; and it is not easy to part with a dignity in submission to that which the heart naturally counts foolishness. Adam, by his affecting to know as God, hath conveyed a principle to men, whereby they think themselves as wise as God. Thus they in the text censured Christ's discourse by their own mistaken reason, believed him not, and at last departed from him.

(4.) The common unbelief of men in things evident to sense manifests the naturalness and easiness of it in the higher mysteries more remote from sense. This is cleared by that one instance of men's flattering themselves into hopes of a perpetual life on earth. Though they seem to assent that they shall die, yet how doth the whole course of many men's actions speak another language, and give the lie to themselves, acting in the extremos of their lives as though they were to linger out an unlimited term of years! If we do not seriously believe that whereof we have every day fresh objects and undeniable testimonies beating in upon our sense, how naturally inclinable must we be not to believe that which is at a distance from us, and whereof we have not such immediate sensible demonstrations! 'If we believe not earthly things, how shall we believe heavenly?' John iii. 12. If we believe not things that are agreeable to the light of nature, that arise from the dictates of our own consciences, but manifest our own unbelief of them by a practice quite opposite to them, how shall we believe the heavenly things Christ acquaints us with? How shall we believe those things which are not seen by a natural light, that have no foundation in the nature and reason of men, but are purely to be discerned by the light of heaven? What hath some foundation in nature is far easier to be believed than what hath only supernatural revelation for its bottom. The gospel is a remedy which neither men nor angels could find out; a way which man in a state of innocence was not acquainted with, nor in a state of corruption without special discovery.

(5.) We have naturally jealousies of God. Since enmity to God was planted by the devil in the nature of man, no friendly act can pass from the creature to God. Without a change of nature, suspicions of God do as naturally arise in the heart as fire ascends upward, or a stone falls downward. Who in a state of distance from, and contradiction to, God, can readily believe that God should love men so much as to give his Son for those he had no need of, that were lumps of vanity and enemies to his glory? and yet, if he would give his Son for them, that it should be to a death so painful and shameful? The fear that Adam had* when, frightened at the voice of God, he hid himself amongst the trees of the garden, hath remained in part with his posterity when they reflect upon their crimes. We measure the nature of God by the qualities of our own; and because we are not forward to remit men's offences against us, we are apt to imagine that God hath not clemency enough to pardon the faults committed against him. Hence it is that persons deeply humbled under a sense of the curses of the law are ready to lick up the dust under the feet of Christ, and beholding an absolute necessity of him, are with much ado brought to believe. Though the design of God in setting out Christ for a propitiation be declared to them, the sufficiency of his merit, the acceptance of it by God, the fruits others have found of it, that the design of Christ's coming was to ease those in that condition, yet they are hardly induced to lay aside those jealousies they have of God. For this cause perhaps God doth not put us off in his promise with a single 'I will betroth thee

* Dailé sur Jean iii, Serm. 9, p. 344.

unto me,' but repeats it three times to assure us of his reality, Hosea ii. 19, 20. How doth Abraham's incredulity break out after a spiritual promise: Gen. xv. 1, 'I am thy shield and exceeding great reward. And Abraham said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?' as much as to say, I would have deeds and not words; I have had such promises before, yet they are not performed. After God's discourse with him, it is said, ver. 6, 'he believed in the Lord,' after this second repetition of the promise. But when it was declared to him before, we have not that remark upon him that he believed. And God complains of this carriage, Hosea. vii. 13, 'I have redeemed them,' (אֶפְרָם, 'I will redeem them,' it is my purpose to redeem them by my Son, as some understand it,) 'yet they have spoken lies against me;' they think I have no good intentions towards them, but thoughts of evil. We think him false, when he is true, and cannot lie; we think him an enemy when he is a friend. We are apt to think God hath designs upon us, and wants sincerity in his proposals. So after the deluge, though God had promised that he would no more drown the world, the people would not believe it, but would be erecting a tower to preserve them from sinking again in those mighty waters. Though Noah's sons were at that time living, had known the promise of God, and they had often seen the rainbow, the sign of that covenant in heaven, yet, Gen. xi. 4, 'Let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered again upon the face of the whole earth.' If this were the reason, as some think, it shews, that they were as unbelieving of the promise of God after the deluge, as the old world had been of his threatening before it. But it is evident in the Israelites, for whom God hath done as much as might be to bind them to a belief of him: he had showered plagues upon their enemies, and miraculous mercies upon themselves, fed and watered them in the wilderness, yet they apprehended God had a design upon them to destroy them, and were scarce ever free from expressing their jealousies by their murmuring, till at last their unbelief was a bar to their entering into Canaan, and the utter ruin of that generation.

(6.) Affecting to stand by a righteousness of our own is natural to us, and therefore unbelief is natural. Adam was to have lived upon his own righteousness in the state of innocence. Since we are fallen, this relic of nature is in us, to desire to rise by our own strength. We would find matter of acceptance and acquittance in ourselves. Some throw themselves upon a heap of external duties, as the heathens had recourse to in their sacrifices, thinking to appease God by the blood of brutes; and believers themselves are sometimes too apt to cling as fast to their inherent graces as to Christ himself,—'We have forsaken all and followed thee, what shall we have therefore?' Mat. xix. 27,—and set Christ's crown upon that head. What pains had the apostle to work the Romans and Galatians from their own righteousness! A desire of a legal justification is inbred. This might be the case of them in the text, when Christ would take them off from their admired shadows, to feed only upon him the substance; to eat his flesh and drink his blood, to believe only in him for eternal life. Sure I am, the Jewish nation split themselves to shivers upon this rock, in a calm sunshine of the gospel, in endeavouring 'the establishment of their own righteousness of God,' Rom. x. 3. This seems to begin early. Before the flood, it is uncertain whether idolatry was set up in the world, or whether after the flood, before the confusion of languages; but resting upon their services, and neglecting the promise of the mediator, seems to be that wherein their unbelief did consist. The patriarchs,* Adam, Seth, &c., had the promise of

* Melanct. loc. octav. p. 230, 23, i.

a mediator, and of pardon of sin in him, and had external rites and modes of sacrificing delivered to them by God, as signs of the promise and props of their faith; these rites and sacrifices, they, *i. e.* the old world, kept up and performed, without considering the doctrine of the promise and faith; and it is likely that they entertained an opinion, that by those ceremonies they did merit the favour of God, and pardon of sin. This is likely to be Cain's miscarriage; he did offer to God, but without that faith which seasoned Abel's sacrifice, Heb. xi. 4; his eye therefore was not fixed upon the promised seed, but probably expected God's acceptance of his offering and favourable return to him upon the account of the offering itself. The object of the worship was the same; Cain brought his offering to the Lord, Gen. iii. 3; the difference was in the sacrifice, and in the inward principle of offering. His offering did not represent the mediator, as a bloody sacrifice would have done; the principle of his offering was not faith in the Mediator; for though he desired to be accepted, yet he desired that acceptance without respect to the promised seed. After the deluge, the boldness of men grew to a greater height, they framed other deities, and so departed from the knowledge of the true God, and the promise of a redeemer. And so likewise after Moses, when ceremonies were instituted to be *mementoes* of a mediator, the multitude, though they professed their belief in the promise of a Messiah, and were the only church God had in the world, yet were forgetful of the intent and design of this promise, and rested not upon it for the free pardon of their sins for the sake of this mediator; but fancied that their sins were forgiven for the sake of the rites and sacrifices under the law. After the gospel shone upon the world, yet the professors of it were very inclinable to expect a justification by their own works. To oppose which was the great design of the apostle in his epistles to the Gentile churches. And afterward, men professing the Christian religion swerved from the main principle of it, and expected to gain pardon by monastic vows, oblations in the mass, intercessions of dead men, rather than by Christ. So that this principle of a self-righteousness and dependence upon external services, with the neglect of the mediator, being the thing God contended with the Jews for, as well as their idolatry, before the incarnation of Christ, and with others after his death and resurrection, and this being an evil which runs in the stream of nature, we may well suppose it to be the main thing which was the cause of the wickedness, and the destruction of the old world, since it is not clear that they had framed any idols to worship. And since barefaced idolatry is exploded among us, this principle of a self-righteousness is more spiritually lurking in us, whereby we invalidate the redemption by Christ.

(7.) The naturalness of unbelief is evidenced by the difficulty of believing under the highest means, and greatest testimonies of a divine authority.

[1.] The eloquence of Christ was admirable. Grace was in his lips. Since he was both the Word of God, and Wisdom of God, his words were enough to divide the soul, and break the rock; they were like a hammer to bruise, like a gentle shower to mollify; yet how few were either broken by his thunders or melted by his lightnings! He acquainted them with the truth, yet they did not believe, John viii. 46. His miracles were stupendous, and above the united force of men and devils; they were undeniably the works of his Father, John x. 37, 38, yet they believed not. Nicodemus, who had some respect for him, and inclinations to him, thinking him 'a prophet come from God,' John iii. 2, understood no more the doctrine of faith in Christ, and a new birth, after Christ's explanation of it, than he did at the first declaration: ver. 9, 'How can these things be?' He was a man of eminency, and in Israel too, ver. 10. It had been no wonder if

one of the common people had been ignorant, or a great heathen philosopher, bred up in the sink of idolatry, should neither have understood nor believed; but a master, a doctor in Israel, a reader of the prophets, so lately taught by John Baptist, who was sent to prepare him for the doctrine of the Messiah, not to believe that which was clear in the prophets, is a declaration of the natural stupidity of men in the things of Christ. It was but a little faith the apostles had, who were constant attendants upon Christ, spectators of his miracles, hearers of his instructions, and those more plainly delivered to them than to the multitude. How often doth our Saviour upbraid them with the slowness of their hearts to believe.* The death and resurrection of Christ are the two necessary foundations of our redemption, the one of his satisfaction, the other of his discharge; yet his disciples were hardly brought to believe either of these; and though Christ did plainly assert both, especially the certainty and necessity of his death, in several discourses with them, yet Peter, who had the greatest insight into the mystery of Christ, presumed to rebuke him for speaking of so incredible a thing as the death of him, who by his own confession was the Son of God. And for his resurrection, though he had often asserted it should be, in as plain words as might be, and fixed the time, within three days, yet they had not the least thought of it, and when it was reported to them that he was risen, they had not faith to believe it, though confirmed by witnesses of their own company, whose honesty they knew to be without exception; and it was so great, that he gives them a sharp rebuke for it: Mark xvi. 14, 'He upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.' After the apostles were risen to a great height of faith, they found it difficult to persuade men, with all the miraculous assistances of the Holy Ghost. That first great miracle of the descent of the Spirit upon them, Acts ii. 6, 11, wherein the majesty and power of God, and the divine authority of Christ, were evidently manifested, in endowing poor fishermen with the gift of tongues, who were never out of the confines of Judea, were skilled in no language but their own, could now speak not one or two languages, but many, not those of the neighbours, but those of the greatest distance, with which nations they could not have had any commerce; yet what an unreasonable construction do the unbelieving Jews put upon it: ver. 13, 'These men are full of new wine.' No reason could second their reproach; such an excess had rather hindered their speaking plainly in their own tongue than furnished them with an ability to speak sense in languages they never before understood. Unbelief invents foolish reasons against that which hath the clearest reason to support it. Are our souls less overgrown with an enmity to God? Is unbelief less natural to us than it was to them under the power of so many miracles, the miracles of Christ, when they called him a wine-bibber, and the miracle of the descent of the Spirit, when they assert the heavenly gift to be the effect of drunkenness? If it were not settled in nature, what is the reason that among multitudes to whom the gospel was preached, so few embraced it, though the things proposed were in themselves desirable, and suited so well, in respect of the blessedness promised, to the natural appetites of men? It was the complaint, that few believed their report. In all ages many, nay, most, have been so far from embracing Christ, that they persecuted the gospel and professors of it. He hath been despised not only by the blinder sort of people, but by many of the most elevated understandings in earthly affairs. By the Jews, too, who had the promises of the Messiah made to them, who expected him about that time, who had so many prophecies

* Davenant, de Justitiâ, cap. xvi. p. 282.

deciphering him, which all had their accomplishment in his person; who were amazed at the miracles wrought in his life, and those which attended him at his death; and can unbelief now be less natural to us, who have those things by report, than it was to them who were eye-witnesses of them? I might add also, that the production of faith by an almighty power is a testimony of the naturalness of unbelief. For were it not so, there would be no more need of the arm of omnipotency to be revealed in the engendering this grace in our hearts, than in furnishing us with any human science, for which we have a natural capacity in our understandings. Since faith cannot be infused but by an almighty strength, unbelief cannot be dispossessed but by the same power, and therefore is rooted in our nature, and friendly embraced by it. It is therefore obvious enough, I hope, that since the Scripture hath told us of the paucity of believers in all ages, and that the exceeding naturalness of it to us is so great and plain, it must be granted, that there may be in this age, and among us, as great a number of unbelievers under the preaching of the gospel, and among professors, too, proportionably, as there have been in other ages and places of the world.

II. Who are unbelievers?

No question but there are many among us inwardly guilty of a notional unbelief, many more guilty of a practical. We have no open idolatry among us,—I mean those of the Protestant party in opposition to the Romanists,—yet is there not an inward practical and interpretative idolatry in the conversations of men? There is not an absolute atheism, or a plain and open denial of a God, yet there is a denial of him in works, Titus i. 16. As God, so Christ, may be denied in works under a profession of him. The testimony of works is deeper and clearer than that of words; the frame of men's hearts is rather to be measured by what they do than by what they say. As such men therefore are more notorious atheists who believe a God and walk contrary to that belief, than those that deny the being of a God and do those things which are more agreeable to the laws of God than the other; so those are more notorious unbelievers that profess an assent to the doctrine of Christ and faith in him, than those that deny his person and office, and yet walk in ways more corresponding with the strictness of his precepts. All that profess faith in Christ, without the vital operations of faith, are unbelievers. We can no more say a man believes who hath no essential act of faith, than that a man lives who exerciseth no function of life. There may be a nominal life with a real death, like those of Sardis, Rev. iii. 2, a faith in appearance without a faith in reality. There may be an abhorring of Christ with the soul even by Judah: Zech. xi. 8, 'My soul loathed them, their soul also abhorred me.' It is as impossible there can be faith without fruits, as that a tree can live without bringing forth fruits proper to its kind. There is no question but those are infidels that have an opinionative contradiction against the gospel, who are a gainsaying people, as the Jews are termed, Rom. x. 21, who at this day call the New Testament a heap of lies, גלגלין און.* Such that may be of that pope's mind, Gregory IX., who is reported to have called Moses and Christ, as well as Mahomet, *tres Bala-trones*, the common barreters or incendiaries of the world. And as little are they to be counted believers that esteem the Christian religion no better than a certain suspicion of 'one Jesus being dead, who is affirmed to be alive,' Acts xxv. 19; that have some floating imaginations of the truth of it, but not a settled certainty. Those that resist the grace of God, that value

* Clark's Sermons, p. 115, out of Matthew Paris.

Christ no more than a dog doth a heap of spices or a bag of delicate perfumes; those that strike the blood of the Lamb of God upon their thresholds to be mixed with the dirt of their feet, which they should sprinkle upon the posts of their doors, the faculties of their souls.

But to waive these at present. Let us consider those that pretend to be disciples of Christ.

1. How many that go under the name of Christians are ignorant and inconsiderate! He that is not rooted in spiritual knowledge can never be rooted in faith; those that see not the beauty of Christ can never account him a fit object of trust. Faith can never be the daughter of ignorance. Only those that know Christ will put their trust in him—Ps. ix. 10, 'They that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee'—and that know him to be one that doth not forsake them that seek him. Belief is an intellectual act; how can any believe till they know what they are to believe? The object must be known before any faith can be exercised about it. If we would believe a man, we must first know him to be a person of credit. The ground must be known to be firm before any man will trust the weight of his body upon it. We must know God in his ways, so as to judge him faithful, before we can rely upon his promise: 'Sarah judged him faithful that had promised,' Heb. xi. 11. If there be no light in the mind, there can be no motion in the will: 'He that walks in darkness knows not whither he goes,' John xii. 35, nor what to lay hold on for his support. How can they be counted believers that know not what Christ is, what offices he is invested with, that cannot give an account of the doctrine of Christ, that never considered the nature of a Christ, the necessity of a Saviour, the corruption of their nature, the immortality of their souls, the judgment to come; who have only some loose thoughts of these things, and therefore cannot have but a loose and shadowy faith at the best, which is an unbelief in the account of Christ? And are there not many among us that understand not what Christ and a spiritual righteousness is, that know not their own wants, and so cannot value Christ's worth?

2. How many receive not the gospel upon a divine account? There are several outward engines which move men to profess the Christian religion: authority of magistrates and superiors, education and custom, respect to some persons valued by them. Some are Christians because Christianity hath been handed to them from their ancestors, and can give no other reason why they are so but because they were bred up in it. The religion of the state is the rule also of many men's religion. What else should make those tribes of Israel, who were fond of the temple-worship in Solomon's time, turn speedy votaries to the calves at Dan and Bethel under Jeroboam's reign, and at last totally revolt from God? Such a founded Christianity is no more sufficient to denominate any man a believer, than a flock of sheep, used to the voice of the shepherd from their first yearning, and to follow his whistle wheresoever he goes, can upon that account be said to be rational creatures.

(1.) The motives of this faith are merely human. The object of faith is divine, but the motive human; the faith therefore produced by it cannot be divine; the effect cannot be of an higher nature than the cause. This belief is as vain as Christ declares the worship to be which is 'taught by the precepts of men,' Mat. xv. 9. Though they have the material object of faith,* yet they have not the formal object, which is the divine authority or truth revealed in it. They take it up from custom and the instructions of

* Lingend. tom. i. p. 323.

their childhood, but not from the true motive of faith. As some men may perform acts of moral virtue, not from principles and motives of virtue, and so may do a righteous act, though not righteously, so those have the object of faith without a principle of faith, and pretend a belief of the truth, but not believingly. The material part of Christianity, without the formal, is just like a carcase, which hath the matter of a man, but not the enlivening and quickening soul. Though they hit upon the profession of the true religion by some human inducements, this makes them no more Christians and believers than if a company of wandering cattle, gone astray from their owner, should break into some ground belonging to their true master in that place whither they are run, should be understood to do it with an intention to come into their master's possession, it being an act of chance in them, and not of choice. It is not the excellency of Christ, but the happiness of an education, the piety of parents and magistrates, the birth and not the judgment, makes them Christians. They are believers by conformity, not by principle. He that embraceth the Christian religion upon such slight or wrong grounds is so far from being a believer, that he rather sins, because he doth not use his reason God hath endowed him with aright in the things of God; was the speech of a philosopher* whose new notions have been thought to minister too great an occasion to the atheism of our times.

(2.) This kind of faith hath no stronger a foundation than the belief of any heathen or idolater in the world. The same motives that excite the papists to observe the superstitions and idolatries of Rome, a heathen to adore the idols of his country, a Turk to cry up the divine authority of Mahomet, a Jew to hate the Lord of life, because they have received those ways of profession from their ancestors, and have sucked them in with the milk of their infancy,—such and no higher motives have common Christians for their faith in Christ. The same arguments which make others refuse him, make them profess him, and had they been educated in any of those ways, they would have been as fond adorers of idols, as now they are professors of Christ, and would have been as ready to drink blood as wine, as sheep will follow their first leader into a slough as well as a fat pasture. This is no better than to be heathens in Christianity, since they both agree in the same inducement of their faith, which can be no more called a true faith, than the Athenians' altar 'to the unknown God' could be called a true worship, Acts xvii. 23; they worshipped they knew not whom, and they knew not why. This is an unbelieving belief, and a childish Christianity, if it proceeds no further. True faith may be ushered in this way, as the faith of the Samaritans was by the report of the woman, testifying that Christ had told her all that ever she did, John iv. 39, but afterwards was transplanted to another ground, and set upon a stock of knowledge,—ver. 42, 'Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world,'—and indeed was a greater faith than we find at that time in the apostles; for they believe him not only to be the Messiah, and a Saviour of the seed of Abraham, as the apostles did, but of the world; acknowledging thereby the whole world sunk into misery, under a necessity of a redeemer, and this Jesus to be the person appointed by God for the redemption of it.

(3.) Such a belief is rather a disparaging of God and Christ, than a believing in them. If we embrace divine truths out of affection or interest in persons or parties, and for the sake of the instruments which convey them, rather than of God who reveals them, we believe not in God but in man; our faith terminates in the publisher, whether parent, or magistrate, or

* Descartes Prin. Philos. Respon. ad secundas object. pp. 78, 79.

neighbour, not in God. If the motive of our belief is not the authority of God, but the influence of some creature on us, or because wise, learned, and holy men believe it, we postpone the credit of a wise and holy God to that of a wise and holy creature, and ascribe a greater veracity to that than to the Creator ; so that though the matter of our faith be divine, yet the manner of our acknowledging discredits the authority and faithfulness of God. As if we believe this or that divine truth delivered in the word, not because it is there delivered, and hath the stamp of God's authority upon it, but because it is in itself undeniable to principles of reason, we believe ourselves rather than God, and thereby reproach and dishonour him, by setting our reason, not as a subject to him, but as a judge of him, and what he dictates. The creation of the world is a matter of faith revealed in the word : Heb. xi. 3, ' By faith we understand,' &c. It is also a truth assented to by reason. But if we acknowledge the creation of the world only upon the account of reason, and not in the respect of the revelation of God, God accounts it not as an honour to him, for it is not a respect to the word of God, but to our own rational principle. To believe, therefore, a divine truth upon human grounds, is to regard man as more infallible, true, and honest, than God himself. As we are to obey because God commands, though men may command the same things too ; and if we perform a thing merely because our superiors enjoin us, though it be a divine command also, and part of the law of God, it is not an obedience to God, but to our superiors ; so when we believe a divine truth revealed to the world by God, not upon the credit of God, but the credit of the persons that acquaint us with it, it is not a belief of God but of man : as if a master orders his servant to go upon such an errand, and he cheerfully and willingly goes, because he hath some business to do that way by the by, this cheerfulness ariseth not from a principle of obedience to his master, but from the opportunity of serving his own turn. As it is thus in obedience, so it is also in the belief of men. Also, when men will assent to no more of the articles of the word than what is made clear to them by natural reason, as well as Scripture arguments, this is not a faith. Though they believe some of the fundamentals, yet if they believe not all those that are fundamental, they truly believe not any one ; because if they did believe one upon account of the divine authority revealing it, they would believe all. For as it is a certain maxim, He that breaks one law of God breaks the whole, James ii. 10, because he despiseth the authority commanding, so he that discredits one article of faith believes not any, because he undervalues the authority revealing one as well as the other. Though the materials of faith be divided into many things, even as many truths as are revealed, yet the foundation and motive of faith is but one, viz., the authority of God ; as, though the law be divided into several commands, yet the authority commanding all is one and the same. He that refuseth a belief to any one article, though he doth not deny all, yet he believes none with a divine faith ; for if he did believe any one with a divine faith, he hath the same reason to believe every one, because the same authority runs through the veins of all, and is as infallible in one as another. If we received any one truth as testified by the Spirit of God, we should receive all the truths the Spirit witnesseth to. Those that are charged in the text with unbelief, might believe many things that Christ said, for they are called his disciples ; but not receiving them from him as a person appointed by God as the Messiah, they are said not to believe ; all their faith in other things was no faith.

Let us then try ourselves by this, what are the motives of our profession of Christianity ? If they be merely human, we are unbelievers in our be-

believing, and are the disciples of men, not the disciples of Christ. A profession now cannot lay such claim to sincerity as those sudden conversions to and acknowledgments of Christianity could in the primitive times; because then the civil power did not countenance it, no carnal interest could encourage them in it, none but inward and spiritual motives could prevail upon them for the owning of it. But since it hath been delivered to us through a long succession of ages, and it is become, in part, our outward interest to be external professors of it, the profession is not sufficient to entitle a man a believer, unless his motives be as divine as theirs.

3. All those who do not diligently seek after that which is proposed in the gospel, come into this rank of unbelievers. As the psalmist argues the atheism of men from their not seeking God, Ps. xiv. 1, 2, and the apostle the unrighteousness of men from the same ground, Rom. iii. 10, 11, so the unbelief of men may be demonstrated from their non-inquiry after Christ, the benefits offered, and the precepts enjoined by him. When we have no valuations of it, when the gospel is not esteemed as the richest jewel, the sweetest dainties, the most ravishing comforts; when it is not sought after with ardent affections, it is not thought worthy of acceptance by the whole man. Can he be supposed to believe he hath a soul, who never minds it? Or can he believe that there is a Saviour, who can go whole months and years without inquiries after him? He that is desperately sick and wounded, and hears of an infallible medicine without employing all his industry to procure it, is either in love with the wound, or doth not believe the medicine so sovereign as is reported! Can we believe that to be necessary for us, that we have no heart to think of? Whosoever is more diligent in things of an inferior concern, suppose them in his judgment more capable to administer satisfaction to him than the things of Christ. Can we be called believers, if we be no more moved than stones with the purchase and promise of Christ? Insensibleness and unbelief are inseparable companions: Acts xix. 9, they 'were hardened, and believed not.' If we were informed of a place full of all earthly advantages, and rich commodities at an easy rate, how ambitious would men be to set out ships to be interested in the trade, or at least inform themselves of the truth of the report. If men did believe the gospel, and the rewards of another world, could they sit yawning, with folded arms, without making inquiries after them? Would they not be full of great undertakings for them? How can our understandings be fully possessed of the goodness of that which our wills do not ardently pursue? If our minds believe it, why do not our wills embrace it? What bar is there between the understanding and the will? In other things, the last judgment of the mind is followed: what that pronounceth good, the will is presently upon the track of; what makes the stop here, if the gospel were assented to. The order of God's working is according to the order of nature, the understanding first enlightened, then the will inclined. If then the will be not inclined to the things of Christ, the understanding was never fully prevailed upon to assent to the truths of Christ. Belief among men is a vigorous act, that makes them govern themselves according to their persuasions; and why should it be less in matters of religion? If Paul believe the knowledge of Christ so excellent, he will 'press forwards towards the mark,' Philip. iii. 8, 12, 14. He will follow after, he will thrust through a crowd of temptations to gain Christ. Can we then be said to believe that Christ hath expiated our sins, calmed the wrath of God, stands ready to knock off our chains, and hath prepared a blessed residence in paradise, without seeking the enjoyment of such necessary benefits? The sottishness of the Jewish rulers is a picture of that which will be in some men to the end of the world. They sent a

committee of their Sanhedrim to John Baptist to know whether he was the Messiah, John i. 19; they were persons of authority and learning among them, 'priests and Levites;' they were sent from Jerusalem, from the great council, to know what his calling was: 'Who art thou?' John told them he was not the Messiah, but that the Messiah was come, and among them, 'whom they knew not,' ver. 26. Now it is strange that those men who expected the Messiah about that time, and came to John for that end, to know whether he was the person (for when they asked him, 'Who art thou?' he answered, 'I am not the Christ,' ver. 20, intimating that the intent of their coming to him was to know whether he was the Christ), should not ask him where the Messiah was, who was this person that he said was among them, and greater than he, how they should know him that was so near to them, and how he himself knew him. But they depart without asking one syllable of this nature, which John gave them so full an opportunity to inquire into, as if they were resolved to reject him before they knew him. They are imitated in the world to this day. If we seek him with loose affections, it is a sign we have only some suspicions of the necessity of him, not a certainty; a faint search ariseth from a weak conjecture.

4. Profane persons are unquestionably unbelievers. A diabolical life and a believing heart are contradictions. No man can with any reason lay claim to a faith in Christ, who prefers the pleasures of the world before the sweetness of a Redeemer, that which is an offence to him before that which is his delight, the weight of sin before the yoke of Christ. How can they believe in Christ that are carried down with the violent current of their own lusts, and regard not one tittle of his law? If faith be full of good works, a scarcity of them implies an emptiness of faith.

(1.) The proper effect of faith is to purify the heart, Acts xv. 9; where therefore the kennel of the life and the sink of the heart are not purified, there is no faith. What wants the essential effect hath nothing of the cause. If 'unfeigned faith' be always attended with 'a pure heart and good conscience,' 1 Tim. i. 5, then that faith which is attended with an impure heart and a defiled conscience is a counterfeit faith. If a good man fall into any sin, there is first a flaw in his faith; the soundness of that would prevent the disease of sin. Hence Christ prays that Peter's faith might not fail, implying that if that kept firm he would give no kindly glance to a temptation, to cursing, swearing, and denying his master. Let no man boast therefore of his faith, if it leaves him in the mire of vice. It is an idol of faith, such an one that the apostle calls but a carcase of faith, James ii. 26, a dead faith, nay, ranks it with the faith of devils, who believe and tremble, who have no profit by it but a sense of damnation before the time. Is it not a faith worse than that of devils? They have a belief with a fear; some boast of a faith in Christ, but a want of fear. A profane faith, an adulterous faith, a drunken faith, are contradictions.

(2.) 'He that commits sin is of the devil,' 1 John iii. 8, not of Christ. He that is under the devil's empire never was Christ's subject by believing. The language of their practice is the same with that of the evil spirits, 'What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth?' Not to believe the truth, and have pleasure in unrighteousness, in the unrighteousness of nature, in the unrighteousness of practice, are made one and the same thing, 2 Thes. ii. 12. The knowledge of God makes men at least escape the pollutions of the world,' 2 Peter ii. 20. This is the lowest degree; whence in consequence is clear that those that are bemired with the pollutions of the world have not the knowledge of Christ. We have no acquaintance with Christ if we cherish those works which Christ came to dissolve and melt away by his blood, and

go about to settle the sovereignty of the devil against the authority of the Redeemer. Can you imagine him to be a loyal subject who gives himself that character, when you see him with arms in his hands against his prince and country? Nor is he a Christian, whatsoever he may call himself, who is a rebel against Christ his sovereign. Such are loath to be thought to doubt of the truth of the gospel, but their lives proclaim that they do not in the least doubt of the falseness of it. Is it possible that those should believe that God sent his Son to die for them, who will not let a lust die to save his glory in the world? A descent to brutishness can never be an assent to Christianity; a filthy swine may as well be a believer as a sensualist in that state; 'as brute beasts they corrupt themselves,' walking in the ways of their own heart. Whatsoever some of the Philippians might profess, yet making 'their belly their god,' the apostle affords them no better character than 'enemies of the cross of Christ,' Philip. iii. 18, 19. It is not opinion but practice distinguisheth a Christian from a pagan. Vile lusts are appropriated to the Gentiles as their will; they are not the qualifications of a believer's will, 1 Peter iv. 3. No man can receive Christ, but he must receive him as a refiner, Mal. iii. 3, with the blood of sprinkling, which purgeth the inwards of the heart, as well as the skirts of the conversation, and sets an edge upon the conscience against everything that is contrary to the plain precept of Christ, and brings the thoughts and desires under his law and yoke. Profane men are the disciples of Epicurus, not the disciples of Jesus. It is as impossible for a man to be an invisible believer and a visible atheist, as to be a man and a toad at the same time.

5. All that live in a constant omission of known duties (though they are not guilty of the grosser open sins), are unbelievers.* Every omission of good, or commission of evil, is not an evidence of positive infidelity (who could, then, have the noble title of a believer?), but when the omission is a constant course. As every actual omission is a fruit of partial unbelief, so all habitual omissions are signs of habitual unbelief, when they are not accompanied with a self-condemnation in the case, and resolutions of reforming for the future. How can we be said to believe in Christ, if we own not the power of that religion he hath instituted, and the holiness of it in the duties it requires, as well as the pleasure of it in the privileges it bestows? When our sloth will not permit us to rise at Christ's call; when our thoughts do but now and then hit upon him, as a bird upon a branch; when his service is a vile thing in our eyes; when we can with as good a heart overlook duties as perform them; when we make other things our business, and the precepts of Christ our burden, is this a believing on him? Faith fights against all iniquity, and obeys not God by parcels and retail. He that cannot endure the injunctions of the gospel in the fulness and extent of their holiness, is an unbeliever: 2 Peter ii. 21, 'they turn from the holy commandment,' because of the purity of its commands, and the universal obedience it requires; there is an enmity to it in the hearts of men. The gospel is a 'doctrine according to godliness,' 1 Tim. vi. 3-5. If we do not consent to the godliness of it, but doat about questions and curiosities; if we receive the light of it into our heads, and not the religion of it into our hearts, we are destitute of the truth, know nothing, believe nothing. If we make light of what God commands, we are no more Christians than the most ignorant Indian and heathen in America; we are not so good as a Jew, who believes the Old Testament, practiseth those duties it enjoins, and the legal rites which he supposeth still in force. Worse we are, if our hearts be not moulded according to the form of the gospel; for Christianity is not a specu-

* Jackson's quarto, changed.

lation, or a dead notion, but an active principle, mastering every faculty of the soul; as active in the will as it is clear in the understanding. He is more an infidel that assents to the truth of a proposition, and the doctrine of the gospel, and yet denies obedience to it, than he that denies the divine authority of it, yet walks morally, and performs the duties incumbent upon him to man; because he in some measure doth that which he denies, the other denies that which he doth profess. The one's denial is verbal, the other's real; one hath a moral conscience, the other a vain religion, James i. 26. Habitual sins are evidences that we are not implanted in Christ by faith, but still under a covenant of works: Rom. vi. 14, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace.' The reign of any one sin in the heart, whether of omission or commission (though it be not of the grosser sort marked by the world), is inconsistent with that faith which interests us in the covenant of grace; for true faith expels sin from the heart, as a candle doth darkness from the lantern wherein it is placed. All the doctrines and propositions in Christianity do in their own nature lead to an holy practice. The articles of the conception, incarnation, and life of the Son of God, are incentives to be like our great head and master. The gospel frees us not from the natural obligation upon us as creatures to obey God; nay, Christ by his death could not free us from it, because the law of nature is immutable and perpetual. As by his death he did not free us from being creatures, so neither could he free us from the obligation which lies upon us as creatures; but the satisfaction Christ made to God increaseth the obligation; for whereas before we were to obey God as creatures, we are now bound to obey God as redeemed creatures; therefore he that is as disobedient to the precepts of Christ as if Christ had never died, hath not a faith in his blood, nor any sense of the obligation of it. How is it possible a man should believe Christ to be the true prophet of God,* without embracing his doctrine? How can we believe him to be an High Priest dying to expiate our sin, without loving him, reflecting often upon our sin with sorrow, and shewing our gratitude in a course of habitual obedience? How can we believe him to be a mighty and gracious King, without reverencing and fearing him? How can we believe the gospel to be a divine truth, without devoting ourselves to that holiness which it enjoins, under the penalty of never seeing God without it? We cannot be persuaded of his divinity without giving credit to his doctrine, nor believe his doctrine without conforming to his law. If, therefore, the will of Christ be contemned in any one thing, we may be assured we believe not the gospel of Christ. If we would put such base conditions upon him, as to have a reserve of any one lust in our hearts, we dislike his terms, disown his royal dignity; and though we would acknowledge him our Saviour, we make him an insignificant Lord. If we have no love to him and his commands, we have no faith in him.

Therefore they do not believe,

(1.) Who wholly neglect the means of grace. He that rejects his word, rejects his person, because he rejects all the means of the discovery of himself, which he after his ascension left upon the earth. What his messengers declare according to his order and the rule of his word, is as if he himself declared it; whence the apostle tells the Ephesians, Eph. i. 17, that Christ preached peace to them; not by himself, for he was never in person there, but by his apostle. Those that contemn all the means God hath appointed, may be rationally thought not to believe any one article of Christianity, though they usurp the name of Christians. By the same reason

* Daillé sur Jean iii. p. 792.

that faith purifies the heart, it puts a man upon all those means which may promote that purification, and increase the vigour of a divine life. They that will not 'know the joyful sound,' have no mind to 'walk in the light of God's countenance,' Ps. lxxxix. 15.

(2.) Who never look into the Scripture. Have they a faith in Christ who have no mind to know his will? What a contempt of a prince would it be to neglect the reading a kind letter from him, or a commanding order! The gospel brings men to obedience by its promises and threatenings, as by moral instruments: 2 Cor. vii. 1, 'Having those promises, let us cleanse ourselves.' If we never look into them, it is a sign we have no mind to believe them, or be under the influence of them. When the credit of them is weakened, the efficacy of them is lost; for no moral instrument can work without an assent to it. Who can be said to believe in Christ, that hath no mind to understand his doctrine, and read the records of his will? What little credit hath God with us, when we do not constantly take hold of that cord which God lets down from heaven to fetch our souls up to him! The belief of an eternal life is little or none, if the Scriptures are not searched, which point out the way to it, John v. 39. He that will not dig into it, doth not imagine any treasure laid up in it, and believes not anything of a legacy of grace in the will and testament of Christ, that flings it at his heels, or only reads it as a story, and a thing of course.

(3.) Who never pray to God, or content themselves with formal and customary addresses to him. This sin of unbelief, being in its own nature 'a departure from God,' Heb. iii. 12, a total neglect of any approach to him, or an unwillingness to have any commerce with him, testifies this sin to be predominant in the heart. He scarce believes there is a God, that will not offer him a spiritual sacrifice, and give him in this duty the glory of all his attributes. Prayer is the first act of faith, the vital act of the new creature; 'a spirit of grace and supplication' are inseparable, Zech. xii. 10; God gives not one without the other. A still-born child is a dead child; a prayerless Christian is a dead Christian, that hath nothing of the life of faith; crying is natural to a child, it is not learned by art. Where there is a full assent to the truths of the gospel (which is the first act of faith), it engenders a vehement appetite for the benefits of it. Prayer is nothing but a reducing this appetite into act, and proposing it to God; the total omission of it, or constant slight performance, is a sign of a dissent from the gospel. We cannot but be zealous for those things we believe to be true and necessary; but when we think the benefit will not recompense the pain and labour, we shall be cold and dull. Where there is a performance of this duty out of natural conscience, but a faintness and languishment in it, it is a sign of too great a predominancy of it, Luke xviii. 7, 8. Christ, speaking of prayer, and crying day and night, adds, that he should scarce find faith on the earth at his second coming; they should be grown dull in prayer, out of a belief that God would not avenge them.

(4.) Who never exercise any serious sorrow for sin. Where there is a faith in Christ, there will be a delight in his law; and a delight in his law cannot be without a resentment of the violations of it. It is impossible he can seriously believe that Christ came to expiate the sin of the world, the sin of nature, and the streams of it, that is not affected with the evil of that sin which put Christ to such sorrow. As the Spirit of grace and supplication are inseparable, so a look upon Christ, and a mourning for sin, are undivided companions, Zech. xii. 10; the sense of the sweetness of Christ is not without a bitterness of soul. Every believer imitates Christ. If Christ groaned under it, he will groan for it; he will look with a wet eye upon all

corrupt propensions to that which is contrary to him. If a true believer would not have a lust live, he cannot but mourn, that notwithstanding all his pains, he cannot make it utterly die. No man can believe that Christ died upon the occasion of sin, and condemned sin by his death, that doth not grieve that ever he cherished such an enemy to Christ, and lament also that it is not thoroughly executed as well as condemned. If we believe he is risen, should we not bewail our clogs, which hinder us from following him in a resurrection to a newness of life? Faith and love are inseparable both in habit and act. Peter's faith flagged before he denied his Master; his love did not revive till his faith was out of its swoon; and both joining together presently engendered a mourning for his sin; and we scarce find Paul, in his highest exercises of faith, without humbling reflections upon his former sin.

6. All that are wholly sunk into worldly affections are unbelievers. He that hath an high opinion of the world's fulness, hath an opinion of Christ's emptiness. Where men's longings are most for the goods of the world, they are little or nothing for the benefits of the gospel; they cannot amount to that hungering and thirsting, that vehemency of desire, for the benefits of redemption by Christ. Would not he neglect the lesser things that believed greater? Can any man be very earnest to be temporally blessed, who believes Christ came to purchase an eternal happiness? Would any man spend his time in the making of puppets, that believed that, with as much earnestness, he might gain a crown? Who would ever rake dunghills, that believed a substantial treasure might be possessed at an easier rate? Who would ever sell his birthright for a mess of pottage, that believed it to be an excellent privilege? Who would drink of a puddle, that did believe a fountain accessible to him? He cannot be a believer that values everything above that Christ he pretends to believe in; that thinks vain riches or pleasure worthy of industry, and overlooks the blood and righteousness of Christ. I appeal to any, whether such can be accounted believers. A filthy swine may as well claim the title. The apostle joins the swinish belly-gods and the covetous earth-worms together, among the professing Philippians, as 'enemies to the cross of Christ,' Philip. iii. 18, 19. Can enemies to the cross of Christ be believers in a crucified Saviour, who is the formal object of faith? Earth is the furthest distant from heaven, and earthy affections at the greatest distance from Christ. Job approves the sincerity of his trust in God, by not having confidence in the things of the earth, as well as in avoiding the common idolatry of the age, Job xxxi. 24-26. All our revolts from God arise from two causes: unbelief of the blessings of the gospel-promise, and deceitfulness of sin, in regard of the goods of this world, Heb. iii. 12, 13. To turn from God infers that there is not a belief that he is an infinite good,* sufficient for our happiness, and to be valued above all other things; and to turn to the creature, as if that were the source of our blessedness, implies a deceitfulness of sin in the understanding, *i. e.* wrong opinions of God and Christ, and the things of this world. He that doth not make God his chiefest good, but placeth his confidence in anything else, is an unbeliever; and he doth not make God his chiefest good that thinks anything can make him happy without God, or that thinks God alone cannot make him happy without earth. If earthly things be preferred before supernatural objects, it is easy to conclude such an one understands not the excellency of that which he so slighteth. No man but will judge him ignorant of the virtue and worth of a diamond, that believes a brass ring to be of greater value, or chooseth a

* Mestrezat in loc.

Bristol stone before it. It is as impossible to believe in Christ, and rely upon the world, as to love God and the world in an equal supremacy; the love of this is inconsistent with the love of God, 1 John ii. 15. If Moses had preferred the pleasure of the Egyptian court and kingdom before the reproach of Christ, it had been sufficient evidence of no faith in the Messiah, Heb. xi. 24, 26. Well, do we believe that the least particle of glory is better than the empire of the whole world, and yet will not deny ourselves the least pleasure for heaven? Do we labour without ceasing, and with a world of trouble, for a little worldly pelf? this could not be, if we did believe the excellency of Christ, that he came to overcome the world, and hath writ contempt upon it, both in his life and death.

7. Distrusters of the providence and promise of Christ, and murmurers at his proceedings. There is a constant murmuring and distrust which shews the reign of unbelief, as a partial murmuring shews a relic of it: Ps. cvi. 24, 25, 'They believed not his word, but murmured in their tents;' as if it were more desirable to be under the Egyptian scourge than God's protection in the wilderness. This was partial in Abraham; his faith faltered in the courts of Pharaoh and Abimelech, when he would save himself by a lie, owning Sarah to be his sister, who was his wife. But it is from a total unbelief, when there is a despondency without seeking to God, when the heart faints, and the hands are not lifted up, when men can weep and howl under their afflictions, as totally undone, and be shut up in a perpetual silence towards heaven like a senseless stake, when they venture upon some forbidden path for their remedy, and move hell rather than heaven for their relief. This was the posture of the heart of Job's wife in that blasphemous advice to him: Job ii. 9, 'Curse God and die;' or a bloody mockery of him, if the words be translated, as some do,* 'Bless God and die.' You have served God indeed for a fine reward, you had best go on blessing him still, and meet with death for your pains. But are you so brutish as not to discern God's disaffection to you, who else would never have reduced you to those extremities? And by the like temptation, Satan hoped he should be our Saviour's conqueror: Mat. iv. 3, 6, 'Command these stones to be made bread.' The voice from heaven which told you you were the Son of God, was a mere illusion. Can the Son of God be exposed to such a condition as to live in a desert, without refreshment for his hunger, and repose for his body? Would a good father refuse bread to his famished child? If you are therefore the Son of God, for whom the heavens were opened, and upon whom the Holy Ghost visibly descended, turn those stones into bread to appease your hunger: thus he tempted him to impatience with his heavenly Father. Promises are not believed where there are disputes against providence, and an unwillingness to wait upon God for his wise conduct of affairs and successful event. Faith crucifies discontents, and unbelief arms them against God and others. When the soul is out-witted by the smallest crosses, and questions the providence of God upon every occasion, as though he had left the government of the world to chance and the power of men, he hath little evidence to shew for his faith. How can we think Christ stored with a fulness to redress our necessities, if upon every light disappointment we murmur against him, and complain of his want of truth and love? How can any trust him with their immortal souls, when they will not trust him with their perishing concerns? Can we believe he has shed his blood for the expiation of our sins (the greatest affair his divine person could undertake) if we cannot submit to him for our earthly comforts? If we resign not ourselves to his wisdom for the management of these, we shall hardly believe his merit sufficient for the pur-

* Durant, Tentat. du Christ, p. 213, &c.

chase of other. This being the fruit of too much anxiety, which is but the stream of this poisonous fountain, evidenceth a man as little a believer as a heathen who knows nothing of the provision made by Christ. By this Christ distinguisheth the Gentiles from his disciples: Mat. vi. 31, 32, 'Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? and what shall we drink? and wherewithal shall we be clothed? for after all those things do the Gentiles seek.' If there be then a predominant impatience (which is a fruit of this solicitousness, a quality proper to a Gentile), it will render the professor of no higher elevation in faith than the pagans, who were darkened in their mind, and in the rubbish of carnality. We cannot think him a sufficient security for that part of us which must run along with eternity, when we will not trust him with the little clay we possess in the world. Little credit can be given to the promises of the gospel, where there is a prevailing diffidence of his providential care.

8. Doubters of the grace of God in Christ. Not every doubt of something contained in the word before it be clearly known to be in the word; the Bereans had then merited a dispraise rather than a commendation. If we do not examine things before we embrace them, we may receive we know not what, and we know not why. Nor are doubts for resolution and clearing things revealed tokens of infidelity. Mary's question upon the angel's message to her of conceiving Jesus, who should be called the Son of the Highest—Luke i. 34, 'How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?'—was not a question of unbelief, but of a desire of clearer information in the manner how this should come to pass. Nor are strong motions of questioning the being of a God, the truth of redemption, and faithfulness and fulness of the promise, testimonies of infidelity, provided they be abhorred and repelled with an holy indignation. Christ had then been an atheist himself, and a distruster of the promises made by the Father to him, who was as strongly moved to it by Satan, as also to fall down and worship that head of rebellion, as ever any man was, Mat. iv. Nor are those doubts which arise at the first conversion, and beginnings of faith, when the state of the soul is like to that of the twilight, a mixture of light and darkness. Nor those which sometimes assault strong believers, as when Asaph doubted whether there were any mercy left in God, when he imagined God had barred up any motion of his bowels towards him. This was a start of passion, a pang of unbelief, not an evil heart of unbelief; his infirmity: Ps. lxxvii. 10, 'This is my infirmity.' A divine spark may live in a smoke of doubt before it springs into a flame; this is a partial unbelief, because there is *imperfectio actus*. But when there is a prevailing doubting of the goodness and truth of the gospel, which is the property of an absolute unbelief; or though this be not questioned, yet there is a doubt of the relation and extent of the promise as to our particular, till the soul closeth with the promise of God in the gospel, it is an unbelief.* It is not like Peter, who staggered when he began to sink, yet casts a look and sends forth a cry to Christ, acknowledging his sufficiency: Mat. xiv. 30, 'Lord, save me.' But the soul is like a ship tossed with the waves of the sea, without an anchor, dashing against every rock and upon every shelf. It stays not on Christ in the midst of those doubtings, but like Cain cries out, 'My sin is greater than I can bear,' Gen. iv. 13. This is an utter rejection of the abundance of grace, and a scanty contracting the infiniteness of God's mercy and Christ's merit, as though our iniquity were more efficacious than divine goodness. Though this is not so openly frequent among us, there being more presumers than despairers, yet this is included in a recourse to anything but Christ. When we are sensible of the fiery tempest of God's

* Sedgewick's Doubting Believer changed.

indignation for sin, as though there were not shadow and shelter enough under the wing of the Lord Jesus, there is not a belief that he is able and willing to save all those that come to him, but jealousies of God and of the authority and divinity of the Scripture entertained and cherished, as when we are jealous of a friend, we shall be so far from believing him, that we shall misconstrue the plainest and clearest declarations he makes; as the Israelites, under the promise of mercy and experience of a deliverance, imagined God intended nothing but their destruction; that the mercy of manna, quails, and water in the wilderness, were the presages of God's anger with them. Such habitual doubts and habitual misconstructions, are evidences of habitual unbelief. All unhumiliated persons are not only to doubt, but despair, of the grace of God while they remain in that condition, and wallow in the mire of the old Adam. God doth not require that we should immediately rely on Christ without falling out with sin, nor can there be a relying act of faith without a resigning act; but when a soul is deeply sensible of its undone condition, accounts itself guilty before God, and will not reach out a hand to lay hold upon the promise of the gospel, nor bring a vessel to receive its treasures; though such may be in the way of faith, yet they are at present in a state of unbelief, confusion, and darkness, and at best like meteors hanging in the air, and fixed nowhere. They understand not the perfections of God shining forth in Christ as an object of trust and confidence. As some doubtings are a sign of little faith—'Why doubt ye, O ye of little faith?'—so habitual doubtings are a sign of a want of faith. When we question the whole tenor of the gospel, and reason against the design and intention of it, we cannot in that act be accounted believers.

We might further instance

In hypocrites. No man could be so prodigiously mad to put on a mask and personate the outward garb of a convert, without endeavouring after the inward frame, if he did believe the declarations of the gospel in its commands, promises, and threatenings.

In apostates, that begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh; who have an *Hosanna* for Christ one day, and, upon a turn of the wind, *Crucify him* the next; that seem to value his blood in their hearts, and shortly trample it under their feet; that take their leave of him when the sun shines hot, or the storms blow hard, and prefer sin before the reproach of Christ, imagining that to embark in the same bottom with him is to be cast away for ever. Such a generation is adulterous, Mark viii. 38; they absolutely violate the covenant, and declare they have no mind to keep it. When our professions rise and fall according to a worldly interest, it is a faith like the motion of a weather-glass. All indeed who have not the operations of faith are unbelievers. Faith is an active thing, and can no more lie idle than fire in an heap of tow.

III. The third inquiry is, What are the causes of unbelief?

1. Original corruption. From the womb we go astray from God, Ps. lvi. 3. Departure from God is rooted in our nature;* it grows with us in the womb, springs with us into the world. An evil heart of infidelity is as old as our life. We are as much disputers against the promises of God by nature, as we are rebels against the law of God, and have as little reliance upon his truth, as we have conformity to his holiness; as little will to be beholden to his mercy, as we have to acknowledge his sovereignty. Our whole man is enmity to him; and the object of our enmity is not one, but all, the perfections of God. The state of our hearts is such by nature that we are

* Sedgewick's *Shepherd of Israel*, p. 307, changed.

more prone to believe anything, though an irrational and idle fable, than the truth of God. Adam did so, and our misery is that we are his children, and exceeding like him. He would stand by the strength of his own understanding, and aimed at a self-sufficiency more than life. He might have eaten of the tree of life, which, say some, was a type of Christ, from whom he was to expect his confirmation, and to whom he was wholly to subject his understanding. It was by Christ as his head, though not as the seed of the woman, that Adam was to be confirmed in an innocent state, as well as the angels are by him confirmed in a perpetual grace and blessedness. If it be so (which I do not assert, though it would deserve consideration), our unbelief of Christ, and the benefits offered by him, runs more directly in a blood, and is more rooted in our nature, than any other sin. It is certain that the first sin was pride, and unbelief of God's threatening. But upon this notion his sin was a refusal of Christ as the root of his standing, to settle himself upon his own bottom, and not wait for his settlement from the wisdom of God, by whom he was created. And, as we have declared before the probability of this being the first sin of the devil, so it is not unlikely but that this was the first sin of Adam, by the temptation of the devil, endeavouring to engage man in his party against the Son of God. But that the tree of life was a type of Christ, the Scripture seems to deny, Gen. iii. 22; the reason rendered of his expulsion from paradise was, lest he should eat of the tree of life. And God would not have hindered him from acts of faith on the seed of the woman, which he had so lately promised and proposed to him as an object of faith.

But howsoever this be, there are two effects of the depravation of nature that are the causes of unbelief.

(1.) Darkness of the understanding, Eph. iv. 18, whereby it is unable to see and judge of the spiritual objects presented to it, as the eye possessed by a beam is to exercise a visive faculty. Though a natural object hath such excellent qualities, that if it be understood, it will attract the will and affections to it, and open the arms of the other faculties for the embracing it; yet if the mind be ill disposed, and doth not judge of that object according to its merit, it will refuse it: as offer a man gold and diamonds, who understands not their worth, he will not be allured by them: a vitiated mind can as little behold the beauty of spiritual things, whereby to embrace them with satisfaction. There must be a concurrence of both the plainness of the object, and the clearness of the mind, for uniting them together. Though the sun shines in its glory in the firmament, yet if the eye be blind, there is no perception of it, or rejoicing in it.* As the apostle saith of the Jews, 'They would not have crucified the Lord of glory, had they known him,' 1 Cor. ii. 8, so men would never reject the gospel, were they sensible of the excellency of it. What hinders them from seeing and acknowledging it but sin, which hath blinded their minds? as nothing hinders a man from admiring the brightness and lustre of the sun but the want of his eyes. Vain things are the objects the mind made vain by sin doth only understand, and such things it hunts after for satisfaction. Since it is alienated from the life of God, it perceives not the light of God. And this natural darkness is too thick and powerful for the light or beams of the gospel which shine into it, without a spiritual illumination, and an opening the inward eye by the same almighty power, which can only restore the eye of the body when the light of it is wholly extinct: John i. 5, 'The light shined in darkness,' *i. e.* upon the dark minds of men, 'but the darkness comprehended it not.' From this darkness of mind springs that alienation from the life of God, or that

* Amyraut. Sermons sur divers Texts, p. 466.

life which we should live by the faith of the Son of God, Gal. ii. 20 ; so that they do not desire the spirit of revelation, which can only open the eye, renew them in their minds, and make them capable of discerning the excellency of spiritual objects. When Adam was in innocence, he did not judge rightly of what he ought ; there was a flaw in his understanding, whereby he did dissent from the truths of God's command. So the corruption of our nature is first and primarily in our understanding, and flows from thence into the lower faculties, as many diseases do from the head by catarrhs into the members of the body.

(2.) Perversity of will, whereby it withstands the impressions of truth, and beats them back, as the hardness of a wall doth the ball flung against it,* and runs as much counter to the will of God's mercy, whereby he would gratify us, as to the will of his authority, whereby he would have us serviceable to him. This is expressed by the apostle in the same place : Eph. iv. 18, 'Through the blindness of their hearts (*πώρωσιν*).' The word translated *blindness*, signifies properly a callousness or hardness, and it is so translated, Mark vi. 52, 'They considered not the miracle of the loaves, for their heart was hardened ;' and John, xii. 40, where the hardness of the heart, which is expressed by this word, is distinguished from the blindness of their eyes. There is a callousness and brawniness in their heart, whereby it is rendered insensible of spiritual mysteries. The enmity to God is seated in the will ; it is seated by the apostle in the mind, Rom. viii. 7 ; it is indeed radically there, as liberty is, but formally in the will. We cannot be said to be enemies to any with our understanding, but in regard of prejudices, principles, wrong notions, which give birth and breeding to that aversion we have in the will to anything ; and the Scripture lays our not coming to Christ upon the obstinacy and inflexibleness of our wills altogether ; which is evident in that when God hath expressed himself in the most indulgent manner, offering those blessings which man in his lapsed condition is in absolute need of, which his own reason in some measure informs him he wants, and when his own heart tells him in his retirements he can have no true acquiescence in anything below ; yet there is a backwardness to entertain the gospel with choice affections, a refusal of that with contempt which should be entertained with joy ; not only an indisposition in the will to receive it, but a contrary disposition and stout-heartedness against it, which makes them 'far from righteousness,' Isa. xlvi. 12 ; a love of darkness, and resistance of light ; that though the word be in part understood, the heart is not presently converted. The chains of sin are affected by the soul, it resists Christ when he comes to file them off, loves the bondage of the one better than the service of the other. 'It is 'desperately wicked,' Jer. xvii. 9 ; it hates Christ for speaking the truth, for pressing a return to God ; it desires not the knowledge of God's ways, and likes not to retain God in its knowledge. From this depravation of the will it is that the gospel meets with the greatest opposition when it first sets footing in a place, or is presented to a person ; as there is the greatest cold in a morning (say some) about the time of the rising sun, because the vapours exhaled are resisted by the sunbeams, which, being not powerful enough to conquer and dispel them, do accidentally unite and strengthen them. So all the sin in man's heart rouseth and arms itself against that gospel which would destroy it.

2. Insensibleness of our state is another cause of unbelief. A congealed soul can no more receive the gospel, than frozen flesh can take in salt, whereby it may be preserved. The Pharisees would not believe but that they

could clearly see, though they were absolutely blind : John ix. 40, ' Are we blind also ? '

(1.) Insensibleness of our lapsed condition, and the miseries attending it. We have a notion of the fall of man, the propagation of his corruption to us by generation ; but the notion in our minds, and a suitable impression upon our hearts, do not meet together : our heads and hearts are at a greater distance in regard of the influence of the one upon the other in this case, than the heavens from the earth. If we understood the deplorableness of it, it were impossible but we should seek for a remedy ; and when we can find no other to satisfy our curiosity, we should acquiesce in the way of the gospel as the fullest, safest, and most gratifying medicine. The physician is not valued when sickness is not felt ; when we understand not ourselves ' poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked,' it is no wonder that we account the gospel foolishness ; and no man can do any other till he feelingly understand what he lost, and what he contracted, by Adam. This was the great obstacle in the Jews ; they so prided themselves in their noble extraction from Abraham, that they never remembered they were the offspring of Adam : John viii. 33, ' We are Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man ; how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free ? ' Do we sensibly understand how much we have incurred the displeasure of the Lord, defeated the end of our creation, enslaved ourselves to vile lusts, subjected ourselves to the devil, the most desperate rebel against God, and the incendiary of the world ? Are we sensible how by Adam's transgression of the precept, we, as well as himself, are exposed to all the curses of the law, become guilty before God, as full of a stout enmity against that God we have offended, as we are full of a thick ignorance how to work out our reconciliation with him ? Are we sensible that we lie in our blood, are estranged from the life of God and holiness of God, possessed by a carnal mind and a perverse will, overgrown with poisonous weeds in our nature, and jolly with that sin which is the cause of our misery ? These are the things the apostle preacheth, Rom. iii., before he insists on the doctrine of faith, intimating that the only way to faith was a due impression of that wretched condition by nature ; and the great cause of unbelief is an insensibleness or inconsideration of it ; and Christ intimates in that sweet exhortation, Mat. xi. 28, ' Come unto me, all you that labour and are heavy laden,' that men must feel the weight and load of the curses of the law, before they will have recourse to the refreshments of the gospel.

(2.) Insensibleness of the severity of God's justice. We fancy a God made up only of mercy, without reminding ourselves of his wrath, and think that, because he hath put bowels into creatures, he hath nothing but bowels in himself to the worst of rebels. Are we sensible of the steadiness of his truth to the word of his threatening, the dearness of his honour to him, and the dreadfulfulness of his wrath ? Will God make a nullity of his own threatening, bear the affronts of his creatures, suffer the honour of his law to lie without regard in the dust ; let the creature triumph in rebellion, and add to his former ingratitude new darings of heaven ? How can we forget to mind the punishment due to our sin ? How can we think the great God, the pattern of all excellency in his creatures, can be guilty of that weakness and falseness to his own honour as to break his word, and that his justice so heinously provoked, presently after his goodness had put his creature into a condition of serving him, as well as arming against him, should tamely put up the injury ? Yet this is the true cause of unbelief ; we consider not the power of his wrath (Ps. xc. 11, ' Who knows the power of his anger ? '), believe him not to be a consuming fire, and understand not the greatness of his anger in such a measure as it is to be feared.

(3.) Insensibleness of our own insufficiency to free us from this miserable condition, and the necessity of some other remedy than what our own nature, or all other human assistances, can furnish us with. Are we not naturally insensible that we have contracted a weakness of our satisfying one tittle of the law? that we can increase our debts and pay none, under an impossibility of remedying ourselves, or proposing a remedy to our offended Creator? Alas! we neither feel our wants nor know how to find supplies. We cannot satisfy that justice we have provoked, nor content that holiness we have displeased. We know not how to reduce ourselves to that God from whom we have wandered, nor regain that heaven we have forfeited. It is as impossible for us to find a place of rest, to which we might invite our souls to return, as it was for the dove sent out of the ark to find a place where to set her foot while the waters were upon the earth. This kind of inconsiderateness was the cause of the Jews' unbelief; they rested in the shell of their sacrifices, their outward washings, and purifications, and lifeless ceremonies, which had as little ability to bring them to God, as by nature they had a will to come to him: John v. 45, 'Moses, in whom you trust.' They trusted not in the person of Moses, but in the doctrine delivered, and ordinances enjoined, by Moses. What sinful or innocent creature hath so much power or favour as to interpose for us? Can any man be able to answer the just demands of the law, or stop the cries of it, by bearing the punishment it requires? Can we remove the loads of our guilt, and stifle the cries of our innumerable sins against us? If we consider the nature and circumstances of sin, the nature of the majesty offended, should we not be sensible that no created strength was able to pay our debts, or bear our punishment and secure our standing? But we are insensible of this; we naturally think a few outward devotions, a pack of legal services, glaving prayers, and heartless reformations, can make God a compensation for all the affronts he hath sustained from us, retrieve our loss, and uncloud the face of God; and we apprehend not how sin hath mastered our faculties, and rendered them impotent to any perfect obedience, and unable to effect the everlasting redemption we absolutely need.

It is this, then, is another cause of unbelief. We believe not that we sprang from Adam, or else we believe not that Adam was so putrefied a root as the Scripture represents him to us. And how can the second Adam appear beautiful to any who is not sensible of the deformity of the first, and his own filthiness by him? Who would look for an eye-salve, that believed himself perfect in the organs of sight, or search for a treasure, who thinks he hath wealth enough already by him? The want of conviction by the law is the cause of the want of conversion to the gospel. We know not the disease, and therefore we regard not the remedy. Had we due apprehensions of this, we should be restless till we had an account of some salvation from it, to escape the wrath of God which is due to such a state. Let each man of us, therefore, in our private retirements, fancy ourselves in the stead of Adam, each woman of us in the state of Eve, and consider what we should have thought after God's conferring a being upon us with so much honour, our committing an offence with so much heinousness, and the terrors of conscience, and fears of punishment felt in ourselves. If we had a full sense, as they had, of the blessedness they had lost, the misery they had contracted, with what affectionate devotion and greediness should we enclose in the arms of our souls the offended Redeemer, with all his conditions! as no question they did the promise of the redeeming seed, which could only pacify their lately offended Creator, and calm their stormy consciences.

3. Pride of corrupted reason. Hence ariseth the opposition to, and slight of, the gospel, in great wits and the princes of the wisdom of this world.

They cannot believe anything which hath not some affinity with the false principles rooted in their minds, nor with the interest of their wills and passions. They contemn the revelations of God, because they are not suited to the opinions and notions of decrepit nature. The disproportion of the truths of the gospel to the principles of the received philosophy, made the Greeks count it foolishness in regard of the design of the sufferings of Christ, which had not entered into the heads of any of the masters of their sects, 1 Cor. i. 23.

(1.) This was the cause of the Jews' opposition to Christ. As the Greeks expected a doctrine savouring of the wisdom of their philosophy, so the Jews expected a Messiah with a magnificent retinue; and therefore the preaching of a crucified Christ was a scandal to them, because of the ignominy of the cross, contrary to the reason or fancy whereby they conducted themselves in the expectation of him. And the greatest wits among them, the pharisees, dashed upon this rock, John ix. 40, 'Are we blind also?' We know the common people are ignorant, but will you charge us with ignorance of the mind and will of God, who are so far above their rank? But, ver. 40, Christ tells them, because they boasted of their wisdom, their sin, *i.e.* their unbelief, remained. The pride of their knowledge was the mother and nurse of their incredulity. The opinion of the excellency of the law given by Moses, above any revelation whatsoever, fixed them in this sin. They always fenced against the edge of Christ's and the apostles' discourses with their arrogant brags of Moses: John ix. 28, 'We are Moses his disciples.' 'We know that God spake unto Moses.' The great doctors of that nation deride the Son of God, while the people adore him; the insolent disciples of Moses condemn him as a seducer and a partner with Beelzebub, while the simple-hearted receive him as the great prophet and son of David, and submit their reasons to the declarations of God; the wise men of the Jews crucify him, while the wise men of the east, the shepherds of Bethlehem, with the wisest creatures in heaven, the angels, rejoice and worship him.* Men swelled up with an opinion of their science, are unfit for faith. This is one of the strongholds exalting itself against the knowledge of God. The babes, and not the wise and prudent men, conceited of their natural wit, have, by the grace of God, the fullest store of the mysteries of the gospel, while he lets others fall, by the subtleties of a proud knowledge, into the snares of the devil. They will not believe, lest they should incur a censure of folly, imprudence, and credulity, though they have a rational ground of believing.

(2.) No question but this is a secret let in many among us. Though they cannot in reason deny the being of such a person as Jesus, cannot but own his miracles, life, death, and the wonders wrought by the apostles, because the testimonies of them are undeniable. Such as believe not this, must believe nothing, not that there is such a country as Spain, East Indies, America, which they never saw; nor believe that there were such persons as Alexander and Cæsar, which were conquerors of nations, which they have only by report; since there are more evidences that there was such a person as Christ, such doctrines taught, such miracles wrought, confessed by the enemies of the Christian religion among the heathen, and to this day by the Jews. But their reasons are nonplussed in the doctrine how Christ should be the eternal Son of God, of one substance with the Father, that the divine and human nature should be so miraculously united without confusion of properties, how an innocent person should die for offenders, that God would not pardon by a free act of grace without a satisfaction, that he

* Daillé, Vingt Serm. sur Mat. xxi. 8, 9, p. 501.

should exact it of his Son, and by so bitter a death as that of the cross. These things have no footing in the common received principles of rationalists; and men are loath to captivate their reasons to the obedience of faith.

But how unreasonable is this pride of reason, upon which the unbelief of many is founded! Because we can understand some things, are our reasons capable of everything? Are they as infinite and unlimited in their capacities as God himself? Do we not owe that respect to our Creator as to believe he might keep some things to be revealed at what time he pleased, and that the discovery of his infinite wisdom might exceed our scanty comprehensions? Would not such rational men skilled in astronomy, laugh at those that should measure the greatness of the sun, and moon, and stars by their eye? If sense be too weak to comprehend the things that belong to reason, may not reason be as much too weak to comprehend the things that belong to revelation? If there be some things above our sense, why may there not be as many things, or more, above our reason? A man's eye cannot behold that which an eagle's can. As reason cannot comprehend the unbounded essence of God, no more than a man, if he were near the sun, could grasp it in his arms, so neither can it comprehend all the revelations of God, no more than a man can enclose all the beams and emissions of the sun in his eye, the infinite wisdom of God being infinitely more above our reason than the sun can be above our sense. We have natural proofs that there is a God, but have we capacities to comprehend the infinite perfections of his nature? Can we understand the depths of his wisdom, the lustre of his holiness, the steadiness of his truth, his boundless immensity, and the abyss of his counsels? We know he is, and hath all this; but we know not how nor the manner of his acting. So we have rational proof that the Scripture is the word of God, that the Christian religion is the revelation of God; but shall we, therefore, think to span and measure all the discoveries of God in Christ? As the nature of God cannot, so neither can the actions or truths of God be grasped in our reason, no more than the waters of the ocean can be included in a nutshell. If men's reason will not own revelation till they understand the manner of all the truths revealed, they must be unbelievers for ever. If they were admitted into heaven in that state, with as great a perfection of reason as Adam had, they could no more have a full view of those things than the angels have of God, who (we know) cover their faces before him; Isa. vi. 2; 'His ways are above ours, his thoughts above ours,' and his wisdom infinitely above our reason, Isa. lv. 8, 9. Besides, the natural light of the understanding is impaired by the fall (not to speak of the loss of that supernatural light man had), and men must not think to be as apprehensive and comprehensive of the reasons of things as if they were in innocence; as if any man could see things as clearly with a beam in his eye as he could if he had a clearness of sight and a fulness of spirits. Let us not think we can comprehend the revelations of God, till we can comprehend the nature of creatures. If men could fully understand the latter, yet those are but natural things, and will not infer that men can comprehend heavenly mysteries by earthly reason. Unbelief springs not from the incredibility of the object, but the weakness of the eye, and a foolish opinion that it is clearer and sharper than it is. As in the text, the things were true which Christ spake concerning the necessity of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, *i. e.* believing in him; but their understandings were weak, and could not conceive of them as Christ meant them, and were more fond of that they esteemed reason, than ready to wait submissively upon him for further information, though they counted him a prophet sent from God,

by reason of his miracles, which might have overruled their foolish imagination of his discourse.

(8.) This pride of reason is manifest in humbled persons at the beginning of a gracious work upon them. How ordinary is it for them to reason themselves from taking hold of the promise of life in Christ, find out witty inventions against the mercy of God, support their unbelief with pretences of unworthiness, wrest the promise to a contrary sense to what God intended it, as Manoah argued from the appearance of God that they should die, Judges xiii. 22, and indulge any ungrounded imagination against the promise of God! A corrupt nature, and a weak understanding, meeting with a doctrine so sublime, render us liable to mistake; as the weakness of our eye, when the height of an object transcends it, is the reason of misconceptions. The transcendent excellency of the thing promised, being in itself so glorious, and the soul finding itself so vile, the proffer is as a dream to it, as the greatness of the deliverance was to Sion, Ps. cxxvi. 1. When men are soundly convinced of the nature and evil of sin, they become vile in their own eyes, their sin galls them, the law terrifies them, the notions of God's justice are awakened in them, and lie close to them; they are sensible of the degenerateness and rebellion of their nature; they think God cannot but hate them, and they expect from him only the severity of a judge; and when evangelical mercy is declared, it seems incredible to them, because it exceeds their nature and dispositions; the greatness of the mercy proffered, makes them stagger; they believe not God to be so merciful, because they cannot be so (for in all conditions of men, it is natural to limit God according to their own petty dimensions, and not elevate their thoughts to his, but judge of his thoughts by theirs); and although his mercy is above the mercy of a creature, we are apt to think his nature as incapable of a largeness as our own. Since man is become vain in his imaginations, he is apt to measure divine things according to those principles which are in his own fancy. Hence God calls to men to forsake their thoughts, their disparaging conceptions of him, since his thoughts were different from theirs, as much as the heavens from the earth, Isa. lv. 7-9. He had higher thoughts of good to them, than either they had for themselves, or could think God had for them. Thus the greatness of the provision God promised the Israelites in the wilderness, made Moses his faith dizzy, he could not imagine how God should send food for such a vast number as six hundred thousand men, besides women and children, for the space of a month: Num. xi. 21, 22, 'Shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together, to suffice them?' The greatness of the thing dazzled his thoughts, which were not proportioned to the mighty power of God, and measured the infinite majesty by a created line. Such humbled persons are like the disciples, who believed not the resurrection of Christ for joy when he appeared among them, Luke xxiv. 41; there was a twilight of faith, but obscured by the darkness of reason, the strugglings of this obstructed the victorious breaking out of the other. They had known their Master dead, his heart pierced, his body buried, they thought they saw him now present among them; their joy sprang up at the sight, but they could not tell how to believe it was he, against so many natural sentiments which might start up in them. Thus poor souls, scorched by the apprehensions of the curse due to their sins, hearing the greatness of mercy, wish it were so great as it is reported; come after, upon a nearer approach to the object, to hope it is so. But as too great an object dissolves the spirits, the strength of the sense, as the lustre of the sun dims the eye, the greatness of the sound deafens the ear; so the transcendent excellency of the spiritual object overpowers the

understanding. It is this, therefore, puts God to his oath, that as he lives he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, Ezek. xxxiii. 11; it was after an objection made by them, ver. 10, that if their transgressions were upon them, and they pine away in them, how should they then live? It is by an oath too that he settles our high priest, that we might have a strong consolation, which our scanty and suspicious natures, when once awakened, would scarce admit of. All this doth arise from a fondness of our own reason, or rather rooted imaginations exalting themselves against the wisdom of God, and a natural corruption whereby man is desirous to darken the glory of God. To produce, therefore, and excite faith, to quell and conquer unbelief, let us look only to the word, as God sends them to the word who measured the thoughts of God by their own: Isa. lv. 11, 'So shall my word be that goes forth of my mouth;' consult not flesh and blood; follow not the *ignis fatuus* of our own corrupted reason, a thing compacted only of earthly vapours. He that seduced the reason of Adam, when it was innocent, will much more be able to mislead ours when depraved and filled with a thousand follies. Let all our *whys* and *wherefores* be subjected to the word.

4. A self-fulness and conceit of ability, high opinions of other things, and resting upon them. This was a bane of the Jews, an outward observance, a bodily compliance with the commands of God; they thought enough to bear them out before his exact tribunal. This was the righteousness of the pharisees, which Christ would have ours exceed, Mat. v. 20; this was the righteousness the Jews pursued, whereby they missed of the other, Rom. ix. 31, 32. Their seeking after righteousness by the works of the law, hindered their pursuit of it in a way of faith.

Two things are to be considered in this:

(1.) Reliance upon outward privileges. The Jews bolstered up their hopes by their pompous worship, their circumcision, the law and ceremonies prescribed immediately by God to Moses, privileges granted by God to no nation under heaven besides, Ps. cxlvii. 19, 20; and upon the account of those, never left till they had brought the Messiah to the cross and grave. As they had before resisted the prophets who called them to the observation of the moral law above the ceremonial, and commanded them to offer their hearts more than their sacrifices to God, they dreamed of a justification by them, and forgot the kernel. There were four names possessed the minds of the Jews: * *People*; they thought God was so bound to the seed of Abraham, and that his seed was so holy by the holiness of their ancestors, that it was impossible for God to reject them, and choose another people. The *law*; that they thought was so pleasing to God, that whosoever observed it, was by that acceptable to God, and righteous before him; hence it is that they so often boast of and oppose their circumcision, and being the seed of Abraham, against the prophets, Christ, and the apostles. The *temple*; they imagined that God had fixed his perpetual habitation in the material temple, and was so delighted with the stateliness and richness of that edifice, that he could not be persuaded upon any account to desert it, and choose a place of worship anywhere else: Jer. vii. 4, 'Trust not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these.' They trusted in the temple as the preservative of the city, and the security of the nation from judgments, and therefore they constantly cried up the temple of the Lord, against the threatenings by the prophets. *Land of Canaan*; they imagined this land so delightful to God that he could not endure to be worshipped in any other

* Λαὸς, Νόμος, Ναὸς, Τόπος.—*Illyric. de velam. Mosis*, pp. 221, 222.

territory; and fancied that God was so tied to that order of priesthood among them, that he would never suffer them to err; and therefore boasted that the law should not perish from the priest, nor the word of the Lord from the prophet. This is the veil which is upon their hearts to this day, and darkens their eyes from beholding the excellency of the gospel, and the true interpretation of the design and meaning of their ceremonies. They thought it enough to sacrifice their oxen, kindle their incense, observe their feasts, and hold up their hands to heaven, though filled with blood. Is not man as apt now to pin his hopes upon modes of worship, the baptismal laver, lukewarm devotions, as if those indeed did propitiate God, wipe off their guilt, and secure their souls, thus making those things which are means, to be ends, centres, foundations of blessedness? Do not the papists at this day depend upon their sacrifice of the mass, the treasures, intercessions, yea, the carcasses, bones, rags of the deceased saints, pilgrimages to shrines and sepulchres, as if those were expiations of sin and satisfactions of justice, the rod of their strength, which is an impediment to their settling their faith and confidence only in Christ!

(2.) Upon moral virtues. How many imagine that because of the good things found in them, God cannot but receive them, though they set not their faces toward, nor fix their eyes on Christ? They think they have no need of the benefits of a Redeemer. Who will look after the righteousness of another, when he thinks he hath enough in his own chest to carry him out, he hath enough in his own bag to supply his wants? Those that think they have no need of Christ, will cast him at their heels. There are two sorts, wherein this natural confidence in a self-fitness appears: such who exalt their own righteousness, and think themselves too good to have any need of Christ; and such who, after some conviction, think themselves not good enough to come to Christ. One is so proud he will not be beholden to him, because he hath a portion of his own; the other is so proud, that he will not be beholden to him till he can bring something of a valuable consideration; for that he expects to receive from him some box of ointment to pour upon him; both which proceed from a natural stout-heartedness against God. We would be Christ's partners, not his almsmen, as if we envied him the sole glory of our justification. Paul laid the whole weight of his soul upon the slender beam of his own righteousness while he was a Jew in religion; but when he became a Christian, it was then, 'Not I, but the grace of God in me.' His circumcision, his being of the stock of Israel, of the sect of the pharisees, and his righteousness in the law (all which he terms flesh), were his gain before, but accounted his loss afterwards, Philip. iii. 4-7. And the reason of this is the ignorance of the perfection of that righteousness which God requires, that his holiness cannot endure a spot, that thousands of services and moral excellencies cannot make a recompence for one sin; they understand not the exactness of God's justice, the extent of the law in its precepts, nor the dreadfulfulness of it in its curses; they understand not the nature of sin to be so great as to need an atonement by the blood of God, or their righteousness to be so foul as to need a covering before the holiness of God. If they have not a notorious stench in their lives, they regard not the noisomeness of the fumes in their hearts. A trusting in any fleshly excellency is a cause of departing from God, Jer. xvii. 5, a robbing God of the credit we ought to give to him. While we would make our own peace, hew a prop out of our own rock, we shall never value, or place our trust in, the Redeemer.

5. Affectation of worldly things. When Israel was grown fat and plump, he 'lightly esteemed,' or disgraced, 'the rock of his salvation,' Deut.

xxxii. 15, יְשׁוּעָתוֹ, his rock Jesus. The Spirit of truth, which engenders faith in the heart, 'the world cannot receive,' John xiv. 17; men of worldly principles and worldly affections. The whole world followed antichrist, Rev. xiii. 3; not only the world in regard of multitude, but in regard of the cause; men whose hearts were linked to the world, and thirsted after a worldly grandeur. As the devil is the god of this world, he blinds the eyes of men that believe not, 'lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine into them,' 2 Cor. iv. 4. Not understanding that natural blindness which all men derive from Adam, but some additional blindness contracted by his means, as he was the god of this world; not physically, by quenching the light of their minds, but morally, by presenting to them some false image of the world in its allurements or affrightments, whereby they were hindered from acknowledging the truth of the gospel, though clear in itself, and resplendent as the light. He is called the god of this world, not by right of possession, but as making use of the things of this world to propagate and maintain his empire in the hearts of men; by those, he bemists their understandings not to know the Redeemer.

Two things of the world are the roots of this sin.

[1.] The riches of the world, the objects of covetousness. The pharisees, which were covetous, derided him after he had preached a searching sermon against it, Luke xvi. 14. What made the young man turn his back upon our Saviour, after some fair show of a willingness to be his disciple, but the love of his possessions? Why did the Gadarenes pray him to depart out of their coasts, but that they loved better to remain with the devil than to live without their swine? What restrained the invited guests from accepting the dainties provided for them, but the immoderate affection to the husbanding a farm, and proving of oxen? Mat. xxii. 5. Why did the third ground so easily part with the word? Because they valued the profits and pleasures of the world above the happiness it proposed. And why did the Jews prosecute Christ to death, but because they feared the Romans should come and take away their kingdom? And what was the reason then, is no less a reason now; when the heart is stuffed up with the dregs of earth, there is no room for the impressions of heaven. Whoever is under the government of this lust, can no more believe than a man lying under a heap of rubbish, or at the bottom of the sea, can see the glory of the heavens. The intentness of the eye upon one object hinders it from the view of another, and that may be more excellent. When men hunt after the wealth of this world, they will hardly gasp for the riches of another. They would make Christ a happiness, by the by, when other things fail.

[2.] The honours of the world, the objects of ambition. This was and is still the root of the Jews' opposition to Christ. They dressed up a Messiah in their fancies, with the accoutrements of a gallant general at the head of his troops, by his conquering sword to make them lords of the world, and all other nations their slaves; and being full of those vain-glorious hopes upon his coming, they were so enraged against the person of Christ, because the meanness of his appearance did not gratify their carnal expectations of grandeur. And though he wrought many great miracles as testimonies of his commission, whereby their judgments might have been swayed to a belief of him, yet he not having that good they conceived, they rejected that good he proposed. The meanness of his person was the occasion of their contempt; he appeared as a despicable shrub, Isa. liii. 2, 'as a root out of a dry ground,' giving no marks of rising to a full-grown tree, to shadow that nation from the fury of their conquerors: 'he hath no form nor comeliness;' there is no comeliness like that of the Messiah we expect, nor that splendour,

wherein he seems to be promised. There is neither the grandeur of the world in his person, nor the eloquence of the world in his preaching. His discourse and practice was to cast contempt and scorn upon it: he allured them not with the sensual delights of the world. The corner-stone is therefore rejected, because it squared not with that fabric of worldly greatness and wealth they had erected. Had he promised them the pleasures of this life, assured them they should set their feet upon the necks of their enemies, the whole nation had listed themselves in his troops. They cracked none of the promises to taste their spiritual sweetness; fed only upon the husk, and never regarded sin, or any deliverance from it. This stakes them down in their unbelief to this day; their eyes cannot pierce to the spiritual things veiled under temporal promises; they are so fond of the shell that they neglect the kernel; and though they have seen their desires and hopes frustrated beyond the time fixed by any of the prophets, yet this dazzling expectation flatters them out of any thoughts of a Redeemer, but what is framed according to their own model. What was that which made the disciples flag in their faith after the death of Christ? The thoughts that Christ was to redeem them, not from the tyranny of sin, but the usurpation of the Romans. When they saw him dead, their hopes were crucified and buried with him: Luke xxiv. 21, 'We trusted that it had been he that should have redeemed Israel.' Now they had no trust left. What made some of the rulers (when they could not in their judgments resist the force of the miracles) silence their confession of him, but the 'loving the praise of men more than the praise of God'? John xii. 42, 43; and our Saviour tells them, 'John v. 44, that one passionately affected to vain-glory doth not only not believe, but cannot believe; it is not possible, while he is so disposed, that he should pay to Christ any thing but a disdain. Ambition and faith cannot join hands together; for faith humbles, and ambition puffs up; faith glorifies God, and pride magnifies itself. None that make their reputation their god, can endure anything which they suppose will blemish it, and expose them to the scorn of the brave spirits of their age.

We see then another cause of unbelief. 'Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble,' 1 Cor. i. 26. Not many *wise*, because they will not submit their reasons; not many *mighty*, δυνατοι, or rich, because they will not be weaned from their worldliness; not many *noble*, because they will not sacrifice their honour. Pride and covetousness have taken possession of the noblest parts of them; pride of the understanding, and covetousness of the will. If we are biassed by both, or either of those, we are as much deriders of Christ in heart as the Pharisees were in their lies and gestures, Luke xvi. 14, ἐξέμυκτηρίζον; and we can no more believe in him now, if ruled by those principles, than they did then who beheld the glory of his miracles; they are both bars against any gospel faith, howsoever clear the truth shines in the midst of men.

6. Sensuality and corrupt habits settled in the soul. The fleshly interest hath produced evil habits, and strengthened them in the souls of men; they become natural to them, and men are loath to be divorced from them. 'Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil, John iii. 19; they are loath to see the vileness and ugliness of their sins, as some are loath to behold the disfigurement of their faces. Let light, the most excellent thing in the world, glare upon one that hath sore eyes, he will shut his eyes against it, or turn away from it; though he understands the worth of it, yet it is a quality offensive to him in those circumstances. As the gospel is too clear for a darkened mind, so it is too pure for depraved affections; as men are wedded to this or that particular vice, they are estranged

from the doctrine and purity of the gospel. Those passions are dearer to them than truth and goodness, they blear the eyes of their mind that they cannot behold them, weaken the intention of the mind that it cannot pursue the apprehension of them, and arm the powers of the soul in opposition to them. Appetite imposeth upon the judgment. As there is a conjunction or opposition between men's carnal affections and points to be believed,* so is there an assent or dissent from them. If there be anything in any part of the gospel which they can wrest to favour their darling lust, they will esteem it as a sweet and delightful voice. But when Christ offers to make them happy,† only he will take away their vice; this they cannot endure; they will take their leave of Christ, and love rather to live without him, than without the swine which they idolise, Mat. viii. 34. They would depend on his sacrifice, but cheer themselves with their pleasures; they would be saved by his cross, but ruled by their lusts; they would part the offices of Christ, which God hath joined together, not to be separated for the pleasure of the rebellious creature; they would lay hold on his promises, but not observe his precepts; and have a faith of reliance without a faith of resignation. To follow the conduct of our affections hinders a conduct by the understanding, and consequently believing, since faith is an intellectual act. The harp and the viol in the feasts hinder any regard to the 'operations of God's hands,' Isa. v. 12, any serious reflections on the designs of his providence in the world; much more any sentiments of Christ, the sum and centre of all his providences. Corrupt affections cloud the understanding, as vapours from the stomach dim the eye. They are like coloured glasses, changing the species of the object which is seen through them; ill judgments of good things are engendered by them, because contrary to those vicious habits which are rooted in them.

7. The devil. As the devil opposes the kingdom of Christ, so he opposeth that which is the great prop of that kingdom. As he would make Christ doubt whether he were the Son of God, so he would make us doubt whether he were sent of God. The devil's sin seems to be a rejecting of Christ as head, and therefore he endeavours to conform men to his own image by unbelief, as God conforms his own to the image of his Son by faith; and this contempt is so properly the devil's image, that he is said to work more particularly in opposition to Christ in the first times of the gospel: Eph. ii. 2, 'Now works in the children of disobedience.' Now that a crucified Saviour is preached as head of the world, now that the Spirit works in men to draw the lineaments of a divine faith, and restore them by it to the happiness they have lost, so Satan works to hinder faith, that he might perpetuate men in that state to which he at first reduced them; for he knows there is no way of recovery but by faith; there is no way to happiness but by a perfect obedience commensurate to every tittle of the law, or a satisfaction for the breach of it; the first we cannot perform, because we have offended; the second we cannot do by ourselves, because we are creatures. God proposed not the way of working to Adam for his repair after the fall, but that of believing in the seed of the woman. If the devil, then, can keep us from faith, he keeps us under his own empire, because there is no other means but faith of settling us under another head. Besides, by keeping us from this, he keeps us from paying any obedience to God. Without this grace we can do nothing but sin, Heb. xi. 6; and with it we may pay him some poor kind of obedience in our own persons, and glorify him in owning the obedience of another which he hath exposed to suffering in our stead. Faith is all the weapons a man can have to resist him, 1 Peter v. 9. He therefore will en-

* Dr Jackson.

† Dailé, sur Jean, iii. p. 405.

deavour to hinder us from it, or disarm us of it. If he cannot prevent it, he lays siege to batter it; he will second the perverse reasonings we make against the grace of God, and stake down the imagination to him. When we are in the dregs of nature, he makes us believe our state is good; when we are looking out of the pit, and begin to consider the proffers of Christ, and the glory of another world, he stirs up an awakened conscience, presents God as an armed enemy, and casts veils upon the merciful bowels of God. As he sowed jealousies of God in the heart of Adam, and endeavoured to plant suspicions of God in the heart of our Saviour, Mat. iv., so he kindles and blows up ill apprehensions of God in the hearts of men. All have a tendency to nuzzle them in good conceits of themselves, and either to allure or bar them from faith in the Redeemer.

IV. Use.

1. How lamentable is this frequency of unbelief! Is it not an astonishment that the devil should find such strong inclinations in us to his kingdom and our own misery, and Christ so little dispositions to his own glory and our own happiness; that we should rather choose to die slaves in the chains of the devil, than to live gloriously in the bosom of a Saviour; that the Redeemer should be so willing to shed his blood, and men's nature so averse from accepting it, upon conditions as much advantageous for their own happiness as the Redeemer's glory? Are not all the good things we enjoy from his mediation—whatsoever natural light we have in our minds, whatsoever good motions start up in our wills? Is it not a thing to be bewailed, to be ignorant of him who is the procurer of such benefits? Like the inhabitants of Egypt, who enjoy the streams of *Nilus*, and the fruitfulness of their land thereby, and know not from what spring the river doth first arise. If faith were a rich manor, a wedge of gold, or a Babylonish garment, exhortations to it would be needless, the desires of men would outstrip one another in the gain of it. Doth not everything besides man obey Christ's voice; did not the winds, seas, diseases, hear his voice, and march or stand still, at his pleasure; and shall we only, who have reason to obey him, use our reasons to rebel against him; we who are capable of believing in him, refuse a real and practical credit to his word? Is it not sad, that many that profess a kindness to him should hate him worse than their sins, worse than their spiritual tyrant? Christ himself wonders, that when he 'told them the truth,' they did not believe, John viii. 46; when he made not only a simple declaration, but demonstrated it by many signs, a truth of the greatest moment which respected a blessed eternity! Thus it was when his divinity, shining through his miraculous actions, might have persuaded men to receive his doctrine with veneration; but not only the obstinate sort rejected him, but some of his followers in the text; and they are offended at his discourse, when they should rather have charged their own ignorance. His miracles might well have persuaded them there must be a divine meaning in what he proposed, of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, though their understandings were at present too short to comprehend it. Is the world at a better pass now? Are the inclinations of men more natural towards Christ than in that age wherein he lived? Do they not rather seem to vie with Christ's voluntariness in undertaking redemption, by their wilful disdain of the conditions of it? Why should not that gospel, which hath been successful in many ages, in some of all conditions, be received in all the terms of it? Why should not his truth move us more, who have been bred and nourished among Christians? Why should they affect us no

more than fables? It is lamentable that Christ, after so many proofs, miracles, and grace, cannot be believed but by a few; that most should prostitute themselves to vile temptations, let a Saviour stand without, while they are playing the wantons with the roysting mates in their hearts; as if the mercies he offered, were his crimes rather than his kindness, and he wronged us by shedding his blood for us.

2. See the madness and folly of men under the gospel. What an indifference there is in many men whether they should believe or no! What folly would it be for any to be indifferent whether he should accept of life when he might have it upon honourable terms; to be indifferent whether they should be saved or no? Is it not a folly in us, and a high crime against God, to be so hardly brought to honour him in that way wherein he hath honoured himself, and would advantage us? Yet this is the folly of many men, yea, of most men. Is not that man worse than brutish, that believes sin damnable, and yet is fond of it; that believes God righteous, and yet offends him; that believes God good, and yet abuseth him; that believes Christ a Saviour, and yet honours him neither in heart nor life? Pretences are vain, if practice be not accommodated to them. Such believe none of those things, they believe not God good or righteous, sin damnable, or Christ a necessary Saviour; they drive on to hell, and turn their backs upon the only Redeemer, as if they envied themselves a happiness, and Christ the honour of their salvation.

3. Let us examine ourselves whether we be true believers or no. 'Prove whether you are in the faith,' 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Much faith is counterfeit; the colour and flame of fire may be so represented by the art of man, that at a distance it may deceive our eye, but upon an approach to it, and touching of it, we shall find nothing of the quality of fire. Faith must be examined by the effects and fruits; what displeasure with sin, what affection to Christ, what flames in the heart, what regulation of the life? Let no man take his outward honesty and morality to be faith; there may be much of that where there is nothing of this. No reason to account all infidels that have been rebels to Christ, and fools to themselves, to be false to men. We may well suppose those in the text to be no debauched persons, they had then forsaken Christ before, when he dissected, in several discourses, the gross lusts of the world. Many civil persons may be without a knowledge of the true intent, ends, and conditions of the coming of Christ; they may own the person of Christ, and oppose the Spirit of Christ, as well as the Jews owned the shadow of Christ, and opposed the substance; acknowledged the types, and refused the antitype. Try your faith by your love to Christ and his truth. It is the common sentiment of men, that whatsoever thing a man counts his sovereign good, he doth necessarily love, and it is impossible he should do otherwise.* Men differ in their choice; one chooseth pleasure, another honour, another wealth, some an image of moral virtue; but, let it be what it will, the affections follow it. If any man be convinced that God is the chiefest good, that Christ is the only Redeemer, in whose death is our life, in whose resurrection is our justification, and that this Redeemer can only bring us to the enjoyment of God, our chiefest good, then the setting our chiefest love upon God the centre, upon Christ as the means, is unavoidable. If we believe those things really, it is as certain that we shall love God supremely; and our love to Christ as the way, would be equal to the desires of the enjoyment of God as the end. If there were many means to bring us to it, there might be a debate which to pitch upon. But if we believe there is but one, and that Christ is this true and living way, that

* Amyraut, *Serm. sur divers Textes*, pp. 275, 276.

necessity which determines our love to the sovereign good, will carry us to affect, and follow, and pursue the only means to bring us to the fruition of it. If a man were desperately sick, and knew of but one medicine to cure him, and believed the cure certain upon the application, the love that he hath to his health would make him affect and value the only means to procure it. Do our hearts come under the influence and authority of the gospel? are the counsels of God esteemed and treated by us as the greatest wisdom? are the conditions of it entertained with readiness? do we rejoice in the light and flames of it? do we stifle those fleshly suggestions that would choke the appearance of it in our hearts, or stop us from obeying the precepts of it in our lives? Is the person, death, resurrection, yoke of Christ precious to us? 1 Peter ii. 7; have we works of faith as well as the professions of it? would we obedient to his commands, as well as interested in the happiness of his promises? John xiv. 21, 'He that hath my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me.' Can we deny ourselves for him, our right hand or right eye, whatsoever is dearest to us? offer up the most affected corruption we have, to be crucified by the power of his cross? These are the operations of faith. But is it so, that we have a confidence in the flesh? that we are fond of a righteousness of our own, or indulgent to some secret lust, and would rather break with Christ than break with either? are we unwilling to come up to the terms of Christ? we would accept some but refuse others; is there anything more savoury to us than Christ? have we higher valuations of the things of the world than of him? are we content he should bear the divine wrath for us, but we would not imitate his divine righteousness, or leave some endeared lust for him? would we have his salvation, but put off the service of him to the dregs of our lives, when we cannot serve ourselves? would we only serve our turn of him, but pay no service to him? do we like his sacrifice and dislike his service, love the sweetness of his cross, but not the weight of his yoke? would we have the benefit of redemption with a liberty of sinning, make the gospel the ground of our confidence, but not the rule of our walk? While our wills are thus unconquered, we are unbelievers. No man believes, that hath not a bended will to Christ, even to his very feet. Our neglects of him render us guilty of this sin, as well as our oppositions to him. The guests invited to the feast, did not absolutely refuse to come, but made their excuses: Mat. xxii. 5, they 'made light of it;' ἀμελήσαντες, were careless of it. What society hath faith with profaneness or a resolution of disobedience? 'What agreement hath Christ with Belial?' There are but two standards to come under, Christ's or Satan's; Christ is only the public head appointed by God. Who do we fight for? He that is not with him is against him; he that is not with him by a gracious will, holy desires, affectionate valuations, holy meditations, resolutions to cleave to him, is against him, and no believer in him. No man can be in league with Christ and the devil at the same time. As Christ said to the Jews, 'If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham,' John viii. 39; so if we are Christ's followers, we shall do the works of Christ; works of obedience to him, and imitation of him.

4. Use is of exhortation.

(1.) Let us endeavour to be stripped of our unbelief. The least thing we can be obliged unto, upon any declaration of God, is the belief of it; an assent to the truth, and consent to the goodness. The law of nature teacheth us, that every revelation of God is to be believed as true, and embraced as good. We are as much bound to believe God, because of his truth, as to love him because of his goodness. What can be more reasonable than to turn to

God, trust in him, accept of a righteousness from him, that we may be freed from guilt, and glorify his name? The owning the Christian religion (supposing there were reasons to doubt of the truth of it), and a faith in Christ cannot render a man worse than he was before. All confess the necessity of an holy life, the approbations of it they have in their consciences. But what infidel can say his life is agreeable in every particular to the dictates of his conscience, and to the law of nature in him? what infidel can imagine he may appear before God with confidence upon the account of his own works, who knows he hath not paid a tribute to him according to his law, according to his own sentiments of God? Though he accounts God kind, because he sees the tokens of his goodness in the world, yet he must account him just, who sometimes sees the arrows of his vengeance darted in the world. If he hopes to be happy by the mercy of God, is he ever the further from it by believing in Christ as the way of communicating that mercy? The satisfaction he thinks to make to God by a righteousness of his own, his own conscience, if he will silently hear it, will tell him is not perfect; is he ever the further from perfection by accepting of the satisfaction Christ offers him in the word, which hath so many marks of a divine stamp upon it, as may easily stagger him; is the righteousness he builds upon impaired by it, or not rather advanced to higher strains of love to God, desires to glorify him, referring all to the Creator, whereby his own righteousness (though not thereby satisfactory to God, or to be rested on, yet) is rendered more agreeable to his own conscience, and more contenting to himself? Faith in Christ impairs nothing that a man's conscience, upon just ground, can call good and comely. But as for those who believe the doctrine of the gospel, there is much more reason they should really have that faith they pretend to. We confess God hath appointed no other to be the Redeemer, why should we not believe it with our hearts and affections, as well as confess it with our lips? Shall he who we believe is advanced by the Father above the highest heavens, be set lowest in our hearts? As there is but one God we must own, so there is but one priest, one sacrifice we must rely upon, one king whom we must obey. Pray therefore against your unbelief. As we need a Christ to free us from the curse, so we need the Spirit to open our eyes, that we may see our misery, the attainableness of happiness, and the way to it, and that we may acknowledge all those admirable qualities and suitableness in the Son of God to all our necessities. We have as great an impotency to faith without grace, as we have an emptiness of it by nature; there is such an estrangedness from God, such an aversion to him, that not a man in the world would ever turn to God without an overpowering grace. No man is an unbeliever but because he will be so; and every man is not an unbeliever, because the grace of God conquers some, changeth their wills, and bends them to Christ. Every man's heart is by nature of the same metal and temper; no man is more pliant than another, but by the fire of grace melting him. Pray for it; God never denied it to any wrestler with him; he knows how to give good things to them that ask him, and are importunate for them. Pray for it as for your daily bread; wait upon the means where grace pours forth itself. Lie at the foot of the throne of grace for this necessary grace, and study much the guilt of sin, the deformity of your souls by it, the extent of the law, the justice of God, and the satisfaction of Christ in the gospel.

(2.) Let believers be ashamed both of their old unbelief and the remainders of it in their hearts. Let us reflect upon ourselves, and remember how Christ called us in his word, and how long it was ere we listened to it; how he made some impressions on our hearts, and the next temptation blotted

them out; he offered his blood, and we would have our sins; he promised heaven, if we would believe, and we would have a hell; with what earnestness did he call, and with what earnestness did we refuse; how gracious was he in his invitations, and how perverse were we in our slights! A great Redeemer soliciting, and a vile wretch would not be entreated! How often have we misunderstood his word, opposed his will, loathed his ways, nor would admit of the levelling a mole-hill lust, much less a mountain! Were we not like most in the eastern parts, that upon the appearance of the star at the birth of Christ, did not stir to present him with their services! Many might see the star, but only three wise men followed the motions of it. How often hath a star risen upon us to conduct us to Christ, darting out its motions to invite us to seek our Saviour, and we have lain in our old country, our old sins, and would neither bring ourselves, nor send our presents, to Christ! And have we been loyal to Christ since he freed us from the chains of the devil, and snatched us from the lion's paw; have we exercised that faith he desired, and paid him that affection he deserved? Shall not this be matter of shame to us? How little faith is there in the world, and how much unbelief; how little faith is there in the hearts of believers themselves, and how much unbelief! What complaints of this sin have we often heard of in holy men, and that even the nearer they came to God!

(3.) Watch against the stirrings and appearances of it. All God's works, from the beginning of the world, have been to draw out our hope and trust in him. He created man a noble creature, and made the world for his service, that he might depend upon the goodness, wisdom, and power of his Creator; he suffered man to fall into misery, that he might give in redemption a stronger ground of confidence in him, and encouragements of recourse to him; he chased man out of paradise after his sin, that by experimenting the miseries of the world, he might pitch his faith more upon the promised seed; he delivered Israel from Egypt with a mighty hand, an essay and type of what he would do in the deliverance of their souls from a spiritual tyranny. At last, he sends his Son to die upon the cross to satisfy for our sins, that no occasion might remain to doubt of his goodness. It is a sin natural to us, therefore should be watched against. The only people in the world acquainted with the promises of God, and receiving the most eminent deliverances from God, yet how did this sin creep in upon them against all arguments to the contrary, and possess their souls! When they heard of the strength of the Anakims, they consult about returning to Egypt, and would rather submit to the mercy of a provoked enemy, than depend upon the promise of a tender and faithful God. They lose the benefit of the former experience of God's kindness. They had seen the Egyptians sinking to death in the waters, and they think the same power cannot match the Anakims upon land; he had spread a table for them in the wilderness, and they think he cannot as well whet a sword to defend them against their enemies, as though his power were spent upon the Egyptian carcasses. How soon doth a sottish fear starve their faith? The promise of their deliverance from Egypt well performed, did not make them expect the donative of the land of Canaan promised to them by the same word of truth from God, who had as much power to perform the latter, as to accomplish the former. Watch against this sin therefore: a sin, as well as an enemy that is slighted, is most dangerous, and often victorious. Grow in the knowledge of God and Christ; the more we know him, the more we shall trust him. Our confidence in a man increaseth, as our acquaintance with his honesty and ability advanceth. The grounds of faith are the perfections of God, and the actions and sufferings of Christ; the more ignorant we are of them, the less we

shall confide in him. Check unbelieving suggestions at the first appearance ; such weeds if suffered to be set will quickly grow. Oppose the truth of God to the suggestions of Satan ; Satan is a false spirit, but he is not more false than God is faithful. Take heed of predominant suspicions of God's fidelity, and Christ's sufficiency. Consider which is most worthy of credit, the true God or a false heart ; a God we never found false, or a heart we scarce ever found faithful. His charter of mercy is of the same force as ever ; he hath not cancelled a bond he stands engaged in. The gospel shall not be drained of its milk till God be emptied of his fidelity ; nor the promises cease to be *yea and amen*, till the seal of the blood of Christ wants an efficacy to confirm them. When you are assaulted by unbelief, you know what power to address. That omnipotent arm that first planted faith, can only protect it against the powers of hell, that would pull it up by the roots. 'Lord, increase our faith' should be as much in our mouths, as 'Lord, pardon our sins.' Let us grieve for it. Our Saviour grieved for the incredulity he perceived in the hearts of the Jews, let us grieve for that we find in ourselves. The mourning under what we feel is a good preservative against any further encroachments. Let us never lay down our arms against it ; as God will not cease till he hath put all the enemies of Christ under his feet, so let us not cease till we have put our unbelief, his greatest enemy, under his and our own.

4. Let those that have faith, strengthen their faith the more, by how much the less there is in the world. Let us more straitly embrace the Redeemer,* renounce all other hopes either in heaven or earth, expect happiness and comfort from nothing but the sufferings of the cross, advance continually in that faith whereby we are united to the Saviour of the world, and let temptation be so far from snatching it from us, that they may be occasions of strengthening it in us, as the blustering of the wind makes men wrap their garments closer about them. The more Christ is slighted by others, the more let him be prized by us, that we may, by adhering to him, endeavour as much as in us lies, to repair the glory he loses by others rejecting him. Let that blood be the more cherished in our hearts, when we see others more desperately treading it under their feet. While we believe he pleads for us in heaven, let us not suffer anything to plead against him in our own bosoms. Joseph of Arimathea owned Christ boldly, when he was crucified, who never did, that we read of, own him before, or ever spake with him, though he was a disciple in secret, Mark xv. 43. This use the disciples that remained with Christ made of the apostasy of those in the text : those that were here offended at his word, did, ver. 66, 'turn their backs upon his person.' Did the other disciples stagger by the fall of their neighbours ? No, they are knit the faster to him : 'Whither shall we go ? thou only hast the words of eternal life ;' and their revolt drew out that glorious confession from Peter, in the name of the rest, 'We believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the son of the living God,' John vi. 68, 69. Strengthen it the more by how much unbelief grows in the world, since we are told by our Saviour, that just before his appearance, for the recovery of the church from the hands of men and devils, and bestowing that glory upon it which he hath promised, there shall scarcely be 'found faith upon the earth,' Luke xviii. 8 ; as at the time of Christ's resurrection, which was a token of the resurrection of the church, the disciples did not believe they should ever see his face again. Since therefore Christ hath told us how predominant unbelief should be, let us the more strengthen our faith. And why should we not do it, as well as the disciples did upon this occasion in the text ? Is it not the same

* Amyraut, Serm. sur divers Textes, p. 456.

gospel upon which our faith is founded, on which theirs was; doth not the cross and resurrection of Christ furnish us with greater encouragements than they had at the time of this profession; have we not the same Jesus to look to, who is the author and finisher of our faith as well as of theirs? Why should any of us suffer ourselves to go along with the corruption of the age, instead of resisting it; why should we be borne down by the temptations of the world, instead of combating with them? Let us be fuller of thoughts of the cross of the Redeemer than of the delights of the world; and the stronger our faith, the sweeter will be our comfort in the worst of times.

A DISCOURSE OF THE END OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.—1 COR. XI. 26.

THE Corinthians were a church planted by Paul, watered by a long preaching among them ; but notwithstanding all his pains, he receives news of some corruptions crept in and overspreading that church. Some that minded the welfare of the Corinthian church, had stirred it up to write to Paul for the decision of several cases, which were controverted among them. In this chapter the fifth case comes to be handled, about the ordering their public assemblies.

(1.) Concerning the carriage of men and women in the church. (2.) The celebration of the Lord's Supper. (3.) The use and exercise of spiritual gifts, chap. xii. In ver. 17, the apostle makes a transition from the first to the second, and taxeth them with their divisions, which were the ground of their other miscarriages.

Observe, Divisions in a church are usually attended with sad consequences. They despoil the church of its beauty and ornaments, and many times are an occasion of sullyng the beauty of divine institutions ; they here hindered a communion one with another. All communion is founded upon union. Divisions shook that, and brought in gross miscarriages about the Lord's Supper ; a disorderly meeting, one taking before another, and making the Lord's Supper a scrambling feast ; discovering more passion one against another than a mindfulness of the sufferings of Christ ; and their unworthy receivings provoked God to send among them deadly diseases, ver. 30. For the reformation of those abuses, the apostle reduceth them to the consideration of the first institution.

Observe, In all reformations, we are not so much to mind what this or that custom of the church is, when there is a clear word to walk by. Christ overthrowes polygamy by reducing the number of persons married to the first institution : Mat. xix. 4, 9, ' God created male and female.' This miscarriage was chiefly in their *ἀγάπαι*, or banquets which they had before the supper, which were set up in imitation of Christ, who kept his last supper with his disciples, at the end whereof he instituted this sacrament. Now, in the eating of this, the rich brought their dainties, and ate to gluttony and

excess, before the poor were met together, and left the scraps for the meaner sort, and thereby did shame them, ver. 22; *i. e.* did upbraid them with their poverty. Whence observe,

1. The community of goods, or a voluntary levelling, was not a standing institution in Paul's time; among the Corinthians you find it not in use. There were rich, and there were poor; distinctions among men; men were proprietors of their own goods.

2. How soon will corruptions creep into the best church! This mighty corruption, an epicurean carriage, crept into this knowing and well-gifted church betimes, while the great apostle was living, who had the conduct of them, and of all the churches of the Gentiles. The devil will sow his tares where God sows his wheat. As he opposed Christ at the very entrance into his office, to make his mediation insignificant, so he will endeavour to corrupt a church at the first entrance of the gospel, to make it altogether fruitless.

3. Human ceremonies are not to be urged, especially when they by abuse degenerate into superstition, carnality, and profaneness.* The apostle, when he explains what he had 'received from the Lord,' and 'delivered to' the Corinthians, makes no mention of a divine institution of those *ἀγάπαι*, love-feasts, which they used in those days, in imitation of the supper which preceded the first institution of this ordinance. He speaks nothing in the defence of this custom, nor urgeth it upon them, but only presseth the institution. Divine institutions, because of God's sanction, are not to be laid aside, though abuses creep in. What is man's must be discarded, what is God's must be preserved. Tares ought to be separated from the wheat. This human ceremony might claim precedence of all others that wanted the stamp of divine authority, and that by reason of its seniority, more ancient than all those of a later date in the church; yet it being but human in its original, is laid aside, and not practised (that I know of) in any church in the world. Paul proves here the divine institution, not any superaddition by the prudence of man.

The Apostle,

1. Shews the end of the institution of this ordinance. In the repetition of the words of institution, ver. 23-25, 'This do in remembrance of me.'

2. He shews the duty of communicants, in the text, 'Ye shew the Lord's death till he come.' This is rendered as a reason why Christ commanded them to eat and drink in remembrance of him, because in that action he would have them shew his death, and celebrate his praise for his sufferings in our stead.

'Ὅσάκις, *as often.* The Lord's supper ought to be *often* administered. The frequency is implied, though how often is not declared. Christ's death is to be every day fixed in our thoughts; and to help our weakness, there should be a frequent representation of it to our sense, *i. e.* in such a way as Christ hath instituted, not as man may prescribe.

Ye. It is the duty of every particular person who communicates in this ordinance to shew Christ's death.

As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup. 'Eat,' not 'see.' This ordinance is not celebrated for the eye only, or for the ear; there must be union, there must be communicating.

Bread, cup. There is no transmutation, no transubstantiation; *bread* still, *cup* still; the subject for the adjunct, *cup* for the *wine* contained in it. It is the same bread and cup after the consecration in regard of their nature, not of their use, dignity, and efficacy. *Bread, cup;* the one eaten, the other

* Slichting. in loc.

drunk. Both must be communicated; bread and cup are not to be separated; Christians have a right to both. Papists have deprived the people of the cup, by the juggle of a concomitancy; because by partaking of the bread, which is the body of Christ, they partake of the blood too which is in it. Christ plainly obviates this error at the time of the institution, when he adds, in giving the cup, emphatically, Mat. xxvi. 27, 'drink ye all of it;' and Mark, chap. xiv. 23, expressly adds, 'They all drank of it,' which is in neither place expressed of the bread. As if our Saviour, foreseeing this error introduced into the world, as he did, would, by a particular note *all*, leave the authors of it without excuse. The most lively representation of his death, the comfort and end of it would be lost, which is signified by his blood.

Καταγγέλλετε, shew. Some take it in the *indicative* mood, as our translators, *ye shew*. It notes to us that by this ceremony the death of Christ is represented. Some take it in the *imperative* mood, and then the words are to be read thus, 'Shew you the death of Christ;' intimating that it is an indispensable duty, that as often as we eat this bread, and drink of this cup, we should have our thoughts and hearts full of the sufferings of Christ, meditations of him, and thanksgivings for him. It is not only a bare declaration of Christ's death, but of the benefits of it.

Till he come. It is a perpetual ordinance in the church. 'Till he come;' till he shew himself in his perfect majesty, that we may enjoy perfect glory with him. Till he come to judgment, when he 'shall come in that manner as he was taken up into heaven,' Acts i. 11. When remembrance of his death shall be swallowed up in the vision of his person, and fruition of the highest fruits of his sufferings, when remembrance shall be removed by sense. In the meantime, it is a standing monument and memorial of the sufferings of our Saviour.

And by the way, we may observe, that the church shall continue to the end of the world, because these mysteries are to be kept up till Christ put a period to this form of the creation. And the church only is the seat and subject of these institutions; they were appointed for the church, not for the world, *i.e.* the unbelieving world.

In the verse observe:

1. The action, *eating, drinking.*
2. The object, *bread, this bread, this cup.*
3. The end of the action, expressed by a command, *shewing the Lord's death.*
4. The *frequency* of it implied.
5. The *durableness* of it, *till he come.*

Doctrine.

1. The Lord's Supper is chiefly instituted for the remembering and shewing forth the death of Christ.
2. The Lord's Supper ought frequently to be celebrated.
3. The Lord's Supper is a lasting and continuing institution, not to be put down at the pleasure of any men.

For the first;

Doctrine. The Lord's Supper is chiefly instituted for the remembering and shewing forth the death of Christ.

It is not a bare historical remembrance of the death of Christ; for then

1. Every profane man who assents to the history of Christ's death, and believes the acting of this tragedy on the cross, and hath a notional belief of the ends of it, might be partaker of this ordinance. But the apostle puts a

bar to that: ver. 28, 'Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread;' so, not otherwise. There would be no need of self-examination if it were only an historical remembrance.

2. A man could not then receive more unworthily, or incur a greater damnation in this than in other acts. But here the apostle fixeth a particular guilt of the body and blood of Christ when received unworthily, vers. 27, 29.

As Christ's death was not a bare dying, but a death with high and glorious ends, so our remembrance of it is not to be a bare historical, but a practical remembrance and declaration. As Christ's remembrance of the promises of his Father was not only an assent to the truth of them, but a recumbency on him for the performance, so our remembrance of the death of Christ ought to be. It is not a speculative remembrance only, as when a man sees a picture of a prince, but such a remembrance as a man hath when he sees the picture of a dear friend absent from him at that time; he remembers not only his person, but the mutual love between them, the actions his friend hath done for him, which stirs up a sense of gratitude at that time. In the handling this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. This is the end of the institution.

II. What it is in the death of Christ that is here remembered and shewn forth.

III. How we should shew forth this death.

I. The remembrance and declaration of the death of Christ is chiefly intended hereby. The Scripture declares this in the time of institution, the night wherein he was betrayed. The words of institution, 'This is my body, which is broken for you,' ver. 24; 'This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you,' Luke xxii. 20;* and the command, 'Do this in remembrance of me,' evidenceth that all the preceding actions of breaking, taking, eating, are commemorative signs of Christ, to excite and confirm our faith in the apprehension of him and his merits.

For the explication consider,

1. God was always careful of appointing and preserving memorials of his favour. The pot of manna and Aaron's budding rod were to be preserved in the ark as standing memorials of God's kindness; stones were appointed to be set up for a memorial of the division of the waters of Jordan to give the Israelites passage to the conquest of Canaan, Josh. iv. 5; the passover was instituted as a memorial of the Israelites' affliction,† and God's gracious protection of them from the plagues of Egypt, their security from the destroying angel, who was commissioned to take away the lives of the Egyptians' first-born, and indeed of all the wonders performed by God in their behalf in that memorable deliverance, as appears by the command for the celebration of it, Exod. xiii. 8, 9. At this passover it is supposed by some that they sang the song of Moses, Exod. xv., for the deliverance at the Red Sea, and after David's time the lxxviii. Psalm, composed by Asaph, treating of the whole deliverance from Egypt and conduct to Canaan, and their own unworthy carriage towards God. And is there not much more reason for a standing memorial of that mercy of which all those were but the types? It hath been the custom of all nations to have an anniversary commemoration of those heroes who have been the instruments of some public happiness to them, and of all societies to commemorate their benefactors. And is there any reason to deny that to the great benefactor of mankind, the Redeemer of the world, Emmanuel, God with us? Shall poor temporary deliverances among the heathen be remembered (deliverance of the capitol by geese, as it was among the Romans),

* Illyric. in 1 Cor. xi. 22.

† Kellet's Threefold Supper, p. 136.

and shall not the great work of redemption, the contrivance of God, the business of heaven, the admiration of angels, the conquest of devils, and the delight of God, have special commemorations?

2. These memorials are necessary,

(1.) Because of the nature of our affections, which rather follow the orders of our sense than the commands of our souls, and are more excited by sensible than invisible objects. Therefore the Jews had Christ in the swaddling-bands of types as well as in the womb of a promise, something manifested to the eye as well as sounded in the ear. Most things we cannot understand but under sensible representations; we understand not God's power, goodness, justice, but by the objects we see those attributes conversant about. Hence are those frequent metaphorical resemblances of spiritual things in the Scripture; and our Saviour sets himself forth to us under the notions of bread, wine, bridegroom. Where there is also such a distance between our heads and our hearts that we can roll the most saving truths in the one without transmitting any part of them to the other, there is need of something to quicken our affections: seasonable memorials renew seasonable thoughts and affections.

(2.) In regard of the inconstancy of our affections. We admire anything at the first notice and arrival, we adore it at the first sight, which by continuance grows more familiar. What our affections rouse themselves up to receive at the first approach, they afterwards, being glutted with the presence of, begin to flag, like the strings of an instrument, that sound well at the first tuning, but quickly slack and need a watchful ear and careful hand to wind them up. We want, therefore, those memorials to keep up our hearts in a warm and glowing temper. In things that concern God's glory and our own salvation, we are all like table-books, quickly worn out; every intruding thought, like a sponge, dasheth out what was written. When we see things acted before our eyes, then we remember what was acted upon the cross. When Christ was risen from the dead, then the disciples 'remembered the word Christ had spoken to them,' John ii. 22. We are naturally dull, and want actual excitements to awaken our sleepiness, and balance our unsteadiness.

(3.) In regard to the natural ingratitude and enmity we have to a crucified Christ, and the weakness of faith. What the world did, that doth every man's heart naturally, account the cross foolishness. It is a matter of difficulty to raze out our jealousies of God, and bring God and the heart together. The trembling believer is apt to look upon God as an enemy rather than a Father, and thinks Christ too glorious to entertain such a wretch. We need these memorials of the bounty of God and kindness of a Redeemer, to stifle our suspicions of him. Who can cherish unworthy reflections on God, when he hath represented to his eyes the strokes God inflicted on the Redeemer? Who can resolve not to love Christ, who sees him bleeding, breaking, dying for them? Gal. iii. 1. The disciples were afraid to perish, Mat viii. 25, 26, when they had Christ in the same vessel with them; they betrayed a weakness of faith when they had Christ present with them, and had frequently beheld his miracles. How is our faith weak when Christ is absent from us? He hath therefore instituted a symbol of his spiritual presence, about which our minds might exercise themselves, as well as the eyes of men did behold his body; that we might urge our hearts to believe his kindness, and settle it upon our affections, and chide ourselves for our unbelief at the sight of bleeding love.

II. What it is in the death of Christ that is here set forth.

1. The painfulness of his death. It is the picture of him as he hung upon the cross, a man of sorrows, broken and bruised by his Father in the day of

his great wrath and great love, when his body was torn, his soul in a dreadful agony, his side pierced, his blood shed. The substance of these, by the breaking of bread and pouring out of wine, is represented; the burden of God's wrath lying upon him, and his groanings under it, are here shadowed. A picture represents the lineaments, looks, and sorrows expressed in the face, which help the fancy, and guide it into more lively apprehensions. The mind of man can conceive more than the eye of man can see. This doth not of itself express the sorrows, cries, groans, agonies, strugglings of Christ; but nothing can be more auxiliary to our souls in the understanding, remembering, fancying of them, whereby the affections may be blown up, and impressions of a crucified Christ made upon our souls. Christ left behind him no other picture of himself but this. Here a wounded, broken, bleeding Christ is presented. Here we may see the sufferings of his body, his pains upon the cross; and here fancy may work about the unconceivable troubles of his soul, his heaviness to death, how his soul was made an offering for sin, Isa. liii. 10, the wrath of God, the cup of bitterness, which if men or angels had but tasted, they would have staggered and fell headlong into hell. Here fancy may represent the piercing his temples by the thorns, and the dints made in his body, which the psalmist compares to furrows, Ps. cxxix. 3.

This was the intent of

(1.) The ancient passover. The lamb was to be killed, the flesh roasted with fire, not boiled, the head, legs, purtenance, Exod. xii. 6-9, which was to set forth the unexpressible sufferings of Christ in every part. Isaac on the wood, the sacrifices on the altar, the serpent on the pole, the striking the rock, were types prefiguring this, but differ from this sacrament. They were to prefigure what was promised, this to commemorate what hath been performed. They were not properly memorials of this. They might in some sense be memorials to remember God of the promise, but this is a memorial to mind us of the performance.

(2.) Of the elements of this sacrament. Bread signifies this suffering, as passing through various kinds of alterations (a sort of sufferings) to be made fit for food: reaped when ripe, thrashed when housed, ground to powder and baked to be made fit for bread. The actions testify the painfulness: bread broken discovers a broken Christ; wine poured out discovers a bleeding Christ. The bread testifies the sufferings of his body; the blood, the agonies of his soul, because the spirits whereby the soul acts are in the blood.*

2. The intention of this death for us. It is in this ordinance represented as a sacrifice-death. He is 'our passover sacrificed for us,' 1 Cor. v. 7, 8. In his institution it was, 'my broken body for you, my shed blood for you,' as an expiatory sacrifice for the satisfaction of justice, appeasing of wrath, and thereupon the remission of sin, and collation of everlasting righteousness. On the cross it was given for us; in the sacrament it is given to us, to mind us what he did for us. It is to shew forth, not only his death, but the intention of his death for us; not for himself, or any sin of his own, for he was 'harmless, undefiled,' Heb. vii. 26, and a 'lamb without spot,' 1 Peter i. 19. There was no more need of his dying for himself than there is a necessity of our being glorious to make God happy. His sole intention was to be an offering to God for the removing of our guilt, the answering the charge of the law, the silencing the terrors of justice, which we were obnoxious to, had not Christ interposed himself as a sacrifice for us that both justice and mercy might be our friends.

3. The sufficiency of this death for us. It would never else be remembered. We remember no more than what was done; we remember a whole

* Goodwin's Peacemaker, pp. 56, 57.

Christ broken. God by covenant with Christ could challenge no more ; and justice, after the striking of that match, could demand no more. Christ paid all that he had to pay ; his whole body was broken, his whole soul bruised, his blood shed ; he gave up all the treasures he had : and this is represented in the supper. The cup Christ drank was full, and by his death he brought a greater glory to God than ever he had before ; whence ariseth a redundancy of merit, an overflowing merit for ten thousand worlds, were they in being and in a sinful state.

4. The acceptableness of this death to God. All that Christ did, he did by order as his Father commanded him. Had not his death been acceptable to his Father, he would not have ordered us to remember it. The great actions God hath done for his people, and by which he hath got most glory, and which have been most delightful to him, he would have commemorated : the passover once a year ; but this, as being the memorial of a thing more pleasing to him, often. It was 'a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour,' Eph. v. 2. He would have it remembered in heaven in the person of Christ, and remembered on earth in the symbols of his own appointment. His resurrection God would have remembered by the change of the Sabbath, but his death by a new and peculiar institution. Spices smell sweetest when pounded : his death is the greatest pleasure to God ; he would have heaven and earth filled with the savour of it. The acceptation was laid in the cross. In the supper we remember his death to plead the acceptableness of it to God.

5. The present efficacy of this death. It is now of efficacy, and will be to the second coming of Christ. Why else should it be remembered ; to what purpose should we commemorate it, if it did not retain an everlasting efficacy ; if his blood, like wine, had lost its spirits, and his body, like bread, were putrefied and consumed since the departure of Christ out of the world ? Some affirm that that blood of Christ which was shed, was not drank up by the ground, or dried up by the sun, or steamed into the vapours ; but was gathered up again by the power of God, and put into his veins.* 'His body saw no corruption,' Acts ii. 31 ; therefore no part of his body, not his blood, which was sacred, the blood of God, therefore not to be lost. As the soul and body of Christ, though separated, were united still to the person of the Son of God, his body being the body of the Son of God, his soul being the soul of the Son of God ; so also his blood, though separated from the body when shed, and had not its natural motion to perform its natural end for the supply of the body, as the soul of Christ did not perform its natural end for the informing of the body when separated from it, yet not a drop of his blood was divided from his person. But howsoever this be, not a drop of that blood is lost as to the virtue and efficacy of it ; and therefore when either pardon of sin is sealed, or purifying grace conferred in this ordinance, it is not by the sole remembrance of his death, but by the power of it efficaciously operating for and in the soul. Therefore this blood is opposed to corruptible things, 1 Pet. i. 18, intimating that the blood of Christ, in regard of its power and efficacy, doth not corrupt. As the sun sheds his light every day about the world, yet remains a fresh spring of new light in the air every morning, so this blood shed upon the cross loseth not its virtue, but is as operative as if we had stood under the cross, and had it dropping upon our souls at the instant of his sufferings. He did once 'offer himself a propitiation for sin,' but he remains a propitiation for ever. The sacrifice was but once performed, Heb. ix. 28 and x. 14 ; that shows the reality of it ; but it is often commemorated, to shew the perpetual virtue of it. This efficacy is therefore shewn forth in this ordinance.

* Dr Jackson.

III. How we should shew forth and remember this death.

1. Reverentially.

(1.) With a reverence of the holiness of God. God's hatred of sin is as high as his love to Christ; he hates sin as much as he loves his Son. He would never else have dealt so hardly with his Son for sin, whom he loved so dearly. He lamented over the loss of Jerusalem, Jer. xii. 7-9; but to manifest his detestation of sin, he spared not his Son; had no relentings when he suffered for us.

(2.) With a reverence of the justice of God. It was more that the Son of God should thus pour out his soul, than if the whole world had been hurled into hell. God struck him till justice had a full revenge, and struck him with that wrath which would have tumbled us into unquenchable flames. Not the pleas of an infinite mercy, a mercy God delights in, could stop the pleas of an inexorable justice. What earthly father but would count the sufferings of his son as the rending of his own bowels, a destroying a model of himself? but to see an infinite gracious God rending the soul of a beloved Son, letting his enemies loose against him, standing by without any manifest relentings, and adding to that torture his own frowns, even that God who cannot see his people afflicted without yearning bowels and a troubled heart, yet to seem unconcerned at the death of his only Son; can we remember this without reverential adorations of the dreadful justice of God?

2. Holily. We must undertake such religious services with suitable dispositions of heart. Let none with irreverent hands touch those *tremenda mysteria*, which may make the hearts of sinners be broken with terror.

(1.) With mourning hearts for sin. A broken Christ must not be remembered without a broken heart; a bleeding Christ and a hardened spirit, a sighing Christ and a senseless heart, are unsuitable. Our passover must be eaten with bitter herbs, with sorrow for past transgressions; we should endeavour to be as much affected as if we had heard every piercing groan in the garden, and numbered every drop of that bloody sweat which trickled down upon him, and been present when the soldiers did so cruelly handle him and pierce him. The springs of our sorrow should be opened and gush out; for it was our sin he bore, and our debt he paid. The fixing our thoughts intently on the death of Christ would melt the ice in our souls. We should look upon him till our hearts be set a-mourning, 'as for a first-born,' Zech. xii. 10.

(2.) With deep considerations of the cursed nature and demerit of sin. It must needs be bitter, killing, condemning, cursed sin, which brought Christ to such a bitter death. What a dreadful breach hath it made between God and us, that nothing but the blood of God can cement and solder? How are we able to answer for one sin, when Christ endured so much for the expiation of the least, as well as the greatest? For death was due to the least; had our sins had less guilt, yet since the least had been an offence against an infinite God, Christ could not have had a less suffering than essentially infinite to make an atonement for it. How can we poor potsberds stand under the stroke of an almighty arm, when the human nature of Christ, though united to the deity, furnished with an eternal Spirit, attended with a gracious assistance, and assurance of a glorious success, startled at it, and hung down his head? Our iniquities met upon him, Isa. liiii. 6, like a mighty torrent that bears down all before it; and who but infiniteness could have stood against such a force? See how sin pressed him down, who upheld the whole fabric of the creation by the word of his power, Heb. i. 3, and could, without any pains, have bore the weight of millions of worlds. Had not sin deserved so great a punishment, Christ should not have suffered it; a God of infinite

compassion (and were there *magis* and *minus* in that which is infinite, more stirred up towards Christ than towards all creatures) would not have laid so great a load of sufferings upon him had not sin deserved it.

(3.) With strong resolutions against sin. It is a sad thing to be Christians at a supper, heathens in our shops, and devils in our closets. To come with a heart resolved to go on in impenitency, is to be worse than Judas, who was struck with remorse at the beginning of Christ's sufferings, when he saw him condemned. Shall he have relentings for his treachery, when he saw him ready to suffer, and we cherish intentions to sin at the representations of his sufferings already fully executed? We should then be not the receivers, but the murderers of Christ, tread him under foot, and make the table of the Lord a shambles, and bring the guilt of that blood upon our heads, which, if sprinkled upon our consciences, would purify them from the guilt of all other sins. The Jews took the passover standing, to shew their intentions to leave Egypt; so must we resolve to leave all correspondence with those enemies which have murdered the Redeemer. The passover must be eaten with unleavened bread; no leaven of sin must be mixed with our services, no leaven of hypocrisy with our lives, 1 Cor. v. 7, 8. We must eat his flesh and drink his blood, that we may live to the praise of his grace; shew it forth in the supper, that we may shew it forth in our lives. The thoughts of Christ's death should be an antidote against the poison of sin.

3. Believingly. We should in this act look upon it by faith, as the meritorious cause of our good. If we cannot believe when we see the price laid down for us and the ransom paid, when shall we believe?

(1.) We should profess our adherence to him. The shewing forth his death is solemnly to cleave to him alone for the pardon of our sins, the justification of our persons, and sanctification of our natures. There was to be in the passover a solemn publishing the nature of that deliverance, the great kindness of God in it, and the ends for which he delivered them. The Israelites that descended from Jacob were 'partakers of the altar' by eating of the sacrifice, 1 Cor. 10-18; *i.e.* they professed themselves to be of the Jewish religion and worship by eating with them; as they that ate of things sacrificed to idols in the idols' temple did by that action profess themselves the worshippers of that idol, and had fellowship with devils in it.

(2.) Look up to Christ in his death as a conqueror. It is 'the Lord's death;' he was a lord in his death, he was a king upon the cross as well as a priest, as he is a priest in heaven as well as a king; he hath both his priestly garment and royal crown; the cross was his victorious chariot, as well as the instrument of his execution. He then nailed our sins to the cross; he then triumphed over the powers of darkness, sin, Satan, and hell, Col. ii. 14, 15. He was a conqueror in his death, spoiling the devil of his prey, and snatching the captives out of his hands; his death was his victory, his ascension his triumph. Regard it, shew it forth, not simply as a death, but a conquering death.

(3.) Plead this death with God. This is believingly to shew it forth. This ordinance upon the earth is a counterpart of what Christ is now pleading and urging to his Father. Our pleas on earth should keep company with Christ's pleas in heaven. It is the best argument to prevail with God, who, though he may deny our prayers, will not deny his Son's blood. It is the best argument to quicken our prayers. Present God with his covenant sealed: God will not deny his own hand and seal; present him with this performance of Christ's priestly office, which is the only office he hath confirmed by an oath, Ps. cx. 5. He is a holy God, and will not deny his own oath.

Plead this death, for such pleas honour his wisdom, glorify his love, own his truth; plead it, and all God's attributes will plead it with you. God himself will join issue with you, for God's attributes are the same with himself. This time is the fittest time to prevail with God. When is a child most prevalent in his intercession, but when he is most exact in his obedience? This was the highest testimony of Christ's obedience, Philip. ii. 8, and engageth God as a Father to shew the choicest tokens of his love. As Christ was most obedient when he suffered it, we are most obedient when we believe it, approve of it, and plead it. When Christ died, he deposited all his merits in the hands of his Father. Go therefore to God for the legacies Christ left at his death.

(4.) Plead this death against sin and Satan. Shew it against every charge. We are like to meet with many rubs, sharp and weighty accusations, too true for us to repel without the vigorous force of this death. Whatsoever accusation Satan can present against you is answered here. Have we sinned? Christ hath suffered for sin; have we sinned many sins? Christ hath shed much blood, not only a drop; have we sinned great sins? the death of Christ for sin was the death of the Son of God. Can the sins of men be stronger to condemn than the blood of God is to save? We have deserved hell, but Christ hath suffered it. The wrath of God, which is the spirit and quintessence of hell, lighted upon him. Christ's death will answer all the subtle charges of the devil, appease the terrors of a raging conscience, silence the curses of the law, and quench the flames of hell.

4. Humbly.

(1.) Consider in this representation what we should have suffered. Those strokes laid upon Christ were due to us; on us should those vials of wrath have been poured. We should have been the mark of all the arrows of God's vengeance. The tragedy acted on Christ should have been acted on us. Had that justice which was due to us seized us, we should have been held prisoners for ever. What power could have rescued us from Almightyness? Those terrors were marching against us. Christ then changed states with us, took our sins to answer for them, and gave us his righteousness to meet the justice of God withal. He suffered the pains of hell, the wrath of God, and purchased heaven for us, which he might have kept without emptying himself, and sent us down to hell. The sufferings were endured by him, but the right to them was ours; it was 'for our transgressions he was wounded, for our iniquities he was bruised, for our peace that he was chastised,' Isa. liii. 5.

(2.) Consider the deplorable misery wherein we were. How deeply were we sunk into the mire, that nothing could pluck us out but the Son of God! How strongly was the stain of sin impressed in our souls, that nothing could wash it off but the blood of God; how enthralled to the devil, that nothing could give us liberty but the death of Christ; how obnoxious to the wrath of God, that not the entreaties of Christ, but the voice of his blood only, could procure our redemption from the anger of that God, who had infinite compassions as well as infinite justice!

5. Thankfully. Such mercies as the death of Christ require high and raised thanksgivings. It is the greatest disingenuity not to pay thankfulness for a free mercy. The supper is a feast upon a sacrifice, as feasts followed the Jewish sacrifices. Christ was offered to God as a sacrifice, and returned to us as a banquet. He was ground by the wrath of God to be bread fit for us to feed on.

(1.) Blessing God for his love in offering up his Son to death. In this death God set open the flood-gates of mercy, and showered down the choicest

blessings on the heads of believers. What is creating to redeeming love? In creation God gave us a being, in redemption he gives us his Son, not only to live with us, but die for us, and afterwards to live for ever for our happiness.

(2.) Blessing Christ for his love in dying. Had not he drunk this bitter cup, we had not tasted a drop of mercy; we had never triumphed if Christ had not died. What thankfulness is due to him because he died for us? How much greater thankfulness is due, since he bore our sins, which is more than death? Who can express that dreadful conflict, when he did sweat clots of blood? He bore the torments of hell *in pondere*, if not *in specie*; the *tantundem*, if not the *idem*. The remembrance of it being commanded by him, witnesseth the solemn pleasure he took in suffering death for us; unwelcome and forced things would not be delightfully remembered by him, or ordered to be remembered by us, as a mark of favour.

(3.) The costliness of this redemption by the death of Christ should excite us to shew it forth with thankfulness. Our redemption this way cost God more than thousands of millions of worlds would have cost him. There was no need of shedding any blood to make them; but the best that ever was or can be was shed to restore us: a word would create them, blood must redeem us. It hath cost God more than all the angels in heaven ever cost him; and should it not be remembered with thankfulness?

(4.) The gain we have by it should excite us to it. Death was bitter to him, but comfortable to us. His punishment was our discharge; and he died for us that we might live with him. What gain we have by his resurrection and ascension is originally from his death. It is 'by the blood of the Lamb' that the devil is 'overcome,' Rev. xii. 11. By his blood are the promises sealed; by his blood all the treasures of grace, mercy, peace, happiness, riches of glory are gathered together for us.

Use 1. If the Supper be a shewing the death of Christ, it is then no sacrifice, but the commemoration of a sacrifice. Sacrifices imply some kind of expiation and atonement; this is a natural notion. The heathens thought by them to appease the anger of their gods. But the Supper is not intended as an expiation of sin, or a satisfaction to God, but a representing that oblation which Christ made of himself by death, which was propitiatory, and therefore is rather a feast upon a sacrifice, than a sacrifice. In a sacrifice, something is offered to God; in a sacrament, something is exhibited to us.

2. How should the death of Christ run much in our thoughts, and our affections be raised! Such affections we should endeavour to have, as we believe those good disciples that stood by him, and saw him hanging and bleeding on the cross, had. And our affections should be of another nature; for it is a question whether they understood the ends of his death, because none of them expected his resurrection. If we can see Christ pierced and not mourn, we may well question whether we have a spirit of grace in us, for such a frame is a proper fruit of this spirit, Zech. xii. 10. We should travel to the Mount of Olives, where Christ prayed and wept; enter into the garden, the place of his agony. See how humbly he went, bearing the cross; take notice of the pains he endured, the mocks and scoffs flung at him; conceive, if we can, the dolorous cries of Christ, when he had lost the sense and sweetness of his Father's love; and from thence let our affections get warmth. How should we set Christ before our eyes, and have the freshest remembrance of his dying love!

Doct. 2. The Lord's Supper is to be frequently celebrated and participated of. *As often*, implying, it ought often to be done.

For explication.

1. How often is not determined. There is no fixed time for the administration of this prescribed by any precept, no day commanded for it; but the celebration of it on the Lord's day was the primitive practice. No day fitter, in regard of its separation to God, in regard of public meeting, in regard of remembrance, both of the death of Christ and his resurrection; the battle and the victory, his death in the supper, his resurrection in the day. Nor how often on that day is it determined by any precept, whether weekly or monthly. The performance is commanded by Christ: 'Do this in remembrance of me,' is urged by the apostle in this chapter, but how often is not prescribed. God was more punctual in the Jewish sacraments: circumcision was fixed the eighth day, the passover annually in March.

2. Nor can there be a constant time fixed for every particular person; because there are varieties in the cases of good men, who may, by some emergency, find themselves hindered one time, and not another. Sometimes men's various callings administer to one more distractions than the calling of another, that they cannot rightly dispose themselves, nor spend so much time as is necessary to a due preparation; and there is more fruit by one sacrament, when men come with a suitable frame, than by a hundred slightly approached to. Though the passover was annually fixed, and under a severe penalty to be celebrated, yet there was a dispensation allowed to those that were under ceremonial uncleanness, or engaged in business on a journey, Numb. ix. 13; but those were diversions brought upon them by the providence of God, not contrived by themselves, which rendered them excusable. If any man had left his journey to that time, which he might have performed at another, and had delayed it on purpose that he might avoid the attendance on that ordinance, I question whether he had been within the compass of God's indulgence. Yet in those cases, though they were dispensed with at the first celebration of it on the fourteenth day of the first month, they were ordered to keep it the fourteenth day of the next month, and not to stay till the next annual revolution, Numb. ix. 10, 11. Yet we find the passover omitted all the time they were in the wilderness, as well as circumcision; and some observe that there was but one passover kept all the time of Joshua. And so great were the corruptions in the Jewish church, that when Josiah came to the crown in the eighth year of his age, and began in the eighth year of his reign to 'set his heart towards God' (2 Chron. xxxiv. 3), yet it was ten years before he could prepare them to keep the passover, which was kept in the eighteenth year of his reign, 2 Chron. xxxv. 19. It was commendable in him to restore it, sinful in the people to neglect it, since it was settled by a plain and standing command.

3. It was anciently often participated of. Some* think every day, from that of Acts ii. 46, 'They continued daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house,' in analogy to the daily sacrifice in the temple. Others understand it of their frugal and charitable entertainments of one another. That it was every Lord's day, is out of question by the ancient writings declaring the custom of the church. And Acts ii. 42, the breaking bread, which is understood by most of the sacramental bread, is joined with doctrine. They would lay in a *viaticum* and provision in those hard and stormy times, when they expected to be snatched away by the fury of persecutors before the next day of public meeting. And this was their custom, to join this to other acts of worship on the Lord's day: Acts xx. 7, 'And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came

* Mr Joseph Mede.

together to break bread.' And this was afterwards kept up in the church in the time of Justin Martyr, and by some in the time of Austin, long after the other, which practice was perhaps grounded on Ezek. xliii. 27 : 'And it shall be upon the eighth day, and so forward, the priest shall make your burnt-offerings upon the altar, and your peace-offerings, and I will accept you, saith the Lord;' a prophecy of gospel times, and the cessation of the ceremonial law of daily sacrifices; by burnt-offerings being meant the Lord's Supper, the remembrance of the great burnt-offering whereby our peace was made; and by peace-offering, prayer and thanksgiving, which are called sacrifices in Scripture, Heb. xiii. 15; and on the Lord's day, being the eighth day, following upon the seventh, the Jewish Sabbath. It is likely it is not absolutely necessary that it should be administered every Lord's day, when the word is preached. The passover, the Jewish sacrament, was but annual, though Moses, the law of Moses, was read every Sabbath in the synagogue. The celebration came to be more seldom, because the frequency of it begat a coldness in the affections of the people, and the commonness occasioned too much contempt of it. The esteem and reverence of this ordinance was dashed upon this rock. The duty is extraordinary; they are *tremenda mysteria*. Great preparations are necessary to great duties; affections must be much exercised, which are wound up to a higher pitch by the novelty and rarity, and flag by the commonness of an excellent thing. The commonness of fasts in our days, and even at this time, hath driven true humiliation almost out of doors.

4. Yet to be frequent in it is agreeable to the nature of the ordinance, and necessary for the wants of a Christian. By too much fasting we often lose our stomachs. The passover indeed was annual, God fixed it to that time; but they had their daily sacrifices in the temple, which were types of Christ, and remembrancers to them of what was in time to be exhibited. We have none but this settled by Christ as an ordinance of commemoration of what hath been exhibited; therefore we ought not, for the time, to conform ourselves only to an annual custom. It is not to be neglected out of a wilful contempt, or a pretence of humility. Disobedience is not a part of humility, but the fruit of pride against God; and though a sense of unworthiness may be so great as to hinder a free and cheerful approach, and deter for a time, yet there ought to be endeavours to get rid of those clouds. We must not rest in lazy and idle complaints. That is no true sense of our own unworthiness which hinders us from a necessary duty.

Frequent it should be. The too much deferring doth more hurt than the frequent communicating. The oftener we carefully and believingly communicate, the more disposed we shall be for it.* Abstinence from it can never be good, but *ex accidenti*, either for defect of a due disposedness, or to excite a greater reverence; but to communicate believingly is good, *per se*, in itself. Now that which is good in itself is to be preferred before that which is good accidentally. If we abstain from it for reverence, we may the rather come for reverence; for if it be worthily received, it increaseth our reverence of God, and affection to him. That is the best reverence of God which owns his authority.

It ought not to be neglected, upon these reasons:

1. Because of the author. It is a feast of God's providing, to which he invites us; to neglect it is a contempt of God's rich provision and gracious condescensions. The great God appointed not any trifling ordinance; his wisdom appoints none but what his power can make worthy instruments; his goodness will appoint none but what his love will make highly beneficial:

* Suarez, vol. xv. disp. lxix. sect. iv. p. 889.

the contempt of it is a slighting both of his wisdom and grace. It is a command immediately from Christ, and therefore the command of God, who hath approved of him and everything he did, and set his seal to this commandment of our Saviour's, and all the rest. Had it not been agreeable to his Father's will, he had not been advanced to his royal dignity to sit upon his throne. It is Christ's command, whom we are bound to obey, by virtue of our allegiance to him, by virtue of the salvation we hope for by him, by virtue of the affectionate obligations we have received from him. It is his command, whom we must own as our Lord, if we expect him as our Saviour: Luke xxii. 19, 'This do in remembrance of me.' It is not left at liberty, *do if you will*, but *this do*. He is our Lord, and he is our Saviour; not only our Saviour, but our dying Saviour. If his death be to be valued as the ground of our happiness, his legacies are to be esteemed as a part of our privilege. He that was going to lay down his life for us, would not appoint what was unnecessary for our present state; yea, were it of no use to us, it is enough that it hath his sanction, whose sole authority deserves to be remembered by us. It was the breaking a positive command, in the eating the forbidden fruit, lost Adam paradise. If God pitcheth upon any means, though never so weak in themselves, they shall be effectual, and means seeming more powerful in themselves shall effect nothing. If the blast of rams' horns be ordained for the overthrow of the walls of Jericho, Josh. vi. 5, they shall do that which he hath appointed. If they be thought contemptible after God's order, all the battering engines in the world shall prove ineffectual to gain the victory. If Jordan be appointed for the healing Naaman's leprosy, 2 Kings v. 10, the waters of Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, shall never be medicinal. When God appointed lamps for the defeat of the Midianites, Judges vii. 20, had Gideon slighted them as too weak, and assaulted them with his numerous host, he had received a rout instead of a victory. When God orders any instrument of conveyance, all other means will be successful; and not only so, but God will be offended, because his institution is contemned; and what can then reasonably be expected from a slighted God?

2. The time when Christ instituted it shews it not worthy of our neglect. It was a little before his death: 1 Cor. xi. 23, 'The same night in which he was betrayed he took bread.' Good men (much less would a good and bountiful Saviour) do not use to employ themselves in trivial concerns, when they are near expiring. That which was instituted, when wrath began visibly to march against him, Judas upon the point of betraying him, and is to continue till his second coming, is not without a desirable fruit. Had it been a needless ceremony, he would not have breathed out a word for its institution; had it been an institution of a light concern, some other time would have been chosen by him for the settlement of it. We may gather the necessity, as well as the value of it, from the time of its institution, which shews that there is something worthy in it of our esteem, and undeserving our neglect. The last words, actions, legacies of dying friends, are never thought matters wholly to be neglected. Joseph's brethren questioned not their pardon from Joseph for the injury they had done him, when they used so powerful an argument as the command of their dying father: Gen. l. 16, 17, 'Thy father did command before he died;' and shall we undervalue, by a wilful neglect, the commands of a dying Saviour, settled by him just before he went to remove the wrath of God from us upon himself?

3. The ends of it declare the unworthiness of neglecting it.

(1.) The remembrance of Christ. This was the end, and twice repeated, 1 Cor. xi. 24, 25. In the giving the bread, ver. 24; in the cup, ver. 25. We

are naturally unmindful of God, ungrateful to Christ; we need something to renew our remembrance of him. He hath left us this dark glass, wherein we may see his face till he return with a full glory; and is it an affection to him never to look upon his picture, the medal of himself, wherein he hath engraven the tracks of his dying love; all that he did, all that he purchased, all his fulness, all his treasures, wherein we may behold him as a Redeemer, pouring out his blood for us, as a sanctifier pouring his blood into us, as a benefactor opening his enriching treasures to us, as a supplier providing for all our wants? How can we say we love him, if we do not mind him? What value have we for him, if he be not in our thoughts? Well, but we may remember Christ otherways without this ceremony. We may, but do we? Do you frequently ponder upon him; are your thoughts of him edged with choice and ravishing affections to him; doth not the body of death hinder you from thinking of the Lord of life? But suppose you are not one minute forgetful of his love, doth it consist with your professed affection to him to choose your own ways of remembering him, and neglect his? Suppose we had a friend who had redeemed us from the galleys, restored us from servitude, redeemed our lives, instated us in a large inheritance, and was to take a long journey, promising to return again, leaving with us his picture, which he would have us look upon at some special seasons, and express in that method a particular mindfulness of him. Though we could not without an excusable ingratitude forget him had we not that picture, yet it were but an unworthy return to deny the observance of so small an order to a friend to whom we owe ourselves. This is all the picture Christ hath left of himself; he never appointed any images or crucifixes, never imprinted the features of his face upon Veronica's napkin. Is it not ingratitude to neglect the remembrance of him in his own method, when he might have put hard conditions upon us; and when it is not a mere sight of him, but a spiritual feast with him, wherein we may suck his very blood into the veins of our souls, as well as the wine into those of our bodies? The primitive Christians used commemorations of the martyrs, whose blood they counted the seed of the church; and shall the stated commemorations of that blood be neglected, which is the foundation, the price, and the purifying fountain of the church?

(2.) It is a seal of the covenant. This is the common nature of a sacrament, to be a seal of the righteousness or justification with God by faith in Christ, Rom. iv. 14.* As a seal affixed to a writing conveys to a man the lands and goods named in the writing. It is not only a sign which represents, but a seal which confirms, the benefit; not a bare picture, but a seal whereby pardon and the whole design of salvation is passed over to us: Luke xxii. 28, 'This cup is the new Testament in my blood, which is shed for you.' It is a confirmation of the rich charter of God. There is a conveyance, *take*, eat; *take*, drink; *take* Christ with all his treasures, with all his graces. This is a pledge of the promise, a pawn given you for the glory to be bestowed upon you. He seals it to the eye by the elements, and to a believing heart by the Spirit. It seals not the truth of the death of Christ, or the truth of your faith. It supposeth faith in the communicant, and supposeth the death of Christ in the institution; but it seals the right of faith, and the interest of faith. It is a seal of the righteousness of faith, of the interest of faith in that righteousness it lays hold on, as the seal of a deed seals the right and interest of the person in that land conveyed to him by the deed. What there is in Christ, is sealed to us in the sacrament for our comfort; the privileges he hath purchased, and the graces he is endowed

* Vines on the Lord's Supper, p. 324.

with ; and when you have this seal you have arguments for prayer, and power to enforce them. Lord, here is thy bow in the cloud, a sign that thou wilt not drown the world ; here is thy seal in the sacrament, a sign that thou wilt not charge my sin upon me, which hath been charged upon my Saviour. It was told me that it was a body broken for me, blood shed for me. I have taken it upon this account, I have taken this seal, I have covenanted to obey thee, I am willing and desirous, and I will be industrious to do it ; be a God keeping covenant with me and truth for ever. The honour of God lies at pawn in his seal, whereby strong consolation cannot be denied to those that lay hold upon Christ in it. As the passover was a pledge as well as a memorial, a pledge of a spiritual as well as memorial of a temporal deliverance, so is the supper a pledge of what is to come, as well as a memorial of what is past ; a pledge of all the fruits of the death of Christ yet behind. Should this then, that is so desirable and confirming a seal, be neglected, which we may believably plead as God's act and deed, when it is not a bare stamp of a seal, which signifies nothing but the image upon the seal ; a seal to a deed which gives the assurance of the advantages in the deed, and an interest in the contents of the deed, and what is conveyed by it.

(3.) It is a renewing our covenant with him. It is a federal rite wherein God exhibits, on his part, Christ and his benefits to us, and we profess our subjection and obedience to him, laying more solemn vows upon ourselves ; whence they were called sacraments, the word signifying a military oath, whereby soldiers oblige themselves to be true to their general and the cause they fought for. And Pliny saith,* he learned it of some Christians, that at their meeting they did *sacramento se obstringere, ne furta, ne latrocinia, ne adulteria committerent, &c.* Covenants are always mutual, something to be done by us as well as for us. God seals the benefits of the covenant on his part, and we seal to the duties of the covenant on ours. It strengthens us in the assurance of the benefits promised, and engageth us to a performance of the duties required. The exhibiting the signs is the seal on God's part ; our receiving the signs is the seal on our part. By taking them we acknowledge that we stand to the conditions, and restipulate with God again that we will be his ; and upon this striking hands with God, we claim a right, and lay hold upon his seals and plead them. You avouch God to be your God, Deut. xxvi. 16-18, obliging yourselves to a greater distance from sin, and detestation of it ; divorce from it to a more quickened obedience, vigorous faith, holy life, and exacter service ; fetching strength from the death of Christ in the supper to this end. Is not this desirable, to be in covenant with God, to have God in covenant with us, to have it more assured on both parts, which is the felicity and security of a creature ?

(4.) It is a communion with God. As the partaking of things sacrificed to idols was a fellowship with devils, 1 Cor. x. 20, so the partaking of that which was sacrificed to God, is a fellowship with God. There is in this action more communion with God (though not the sole act of communion, as some say) than in any other religious act. Prayer is an act of homage ; praise an act of gratitude. We have not so near a communion with a person, either by petitioning for something we want, or returning him thanks for a favour received, as we have by sitting with him at his table, partaking of the same bread and the same cup. In all nations the nearest fellowship consists in acts of this nature. The eating of the supper, as the eating of sacrifices, is a federal rite between God and the believer, signifying that there is a covenant of friendship between him and them. It is the Lord's

* Plin. lib. x. epist. xcviij.

table, and what feasted and cheered the heart of God in heaven, viz., the body and blood of Christ, God gives us to feast our souls on earth, so that we do in a manner eat and drink with him in this love banquet. Take, eat, manifests a communion; Christ is really presented to us, and faith really takes him, closes with him, lodgeth him in the soul, makes him an indweller; and the soul hath a spiritual communion with him in his life and death, as if we did really eat his flesh and drink his blood presented to us in the elements. Eating signifies taking in Christ as our own, his righteousness, and whatsoever is his in communion with him. Is this a privilege to be neglected? To sit at God's table, partake of his dainties, that which he doth most highly value, and deserves the value of the creature infinitely above the sitting at the table of the greatest monarch on earth; that which was the sweet savour to God upon the cross, is offered to us as a feast upon the table; and we eat that body and drink that blood which atoned God, and thereby have a communion with him in his pleasure and delight.

4. The benefits of this ordinance require frequency. As everything hath its use in creation, so likewise in redemption; God made nothing in vain in the one, and appoints nothing in vain in the other.

These benefits are many.

(1.) Weakening of sin; not physically but morally. The lively representation and consideration of the death of Christ, with all its circumstances, is a strong incentive and assistance to the mortifying sin in us; and there is no branch of the body of death, but some consideration or other fetched from the death of Christ, hath a virtue to destroy. How can any be proud when he sees Christ lay down his life in the form of a mean man; how can he be covetous, when he sees Christ turning his back upon the profits of the world? Christ upon the cross, viewed by a sparkling eye of faith, would work the same effect in our souls, which the looking upon the serpent in the wilderness wrought in the Israelites' poisoned bodies, expelling the venom from the vitals and out-works of the members, and abating the fury of a corrupt paroxysm. Now as feathered arrows will fly further, and pierce deeper, than when they are carried by their own weight only,* so such considerations, when helped by sensible representations, do more excite the faculty to a vigorous operation by a more sensible affecting the mind. The word declares the evil of sin, and the sacrament shews it in the person of our Saviour; sin is known by the word to be deadly, and it is seen to be so in the supper. Then is the soul most affected against sin, when God's indignation against it is manifested, when it beholds Christ made a curse, and bearing all that the law denounceth against sin, and sees the desert of sin and the terrors of wrath. Never doth sin look so ghastly, and repentance so sorrowfully, as when Christ and the soul meet together in this ordinance. The looking upon Christ opens the spring of sorrow, Zech. xii. 10. In this we take a crucified Christ that we may have crucified sins. The very approach to this ordinance, kindles resolutions against corruption, and smothers the flames of sin in the soul. Who that understands the nature of sin, and the evil consequents of it, would be without such a benefit? Are there no invading temptations to be rooted, no indwelling sins to be expelled, no distractions to be settled; is there not still a root of bitterness always sprouting, an inward serpent always brooding, an Egyptian furnace in our hearts, sending out its sparks; must not the root be more withered, the poison cast out, the indwelling sin tamed, the furnace quenched? Do we not then need all the assistances to faith in the mortifying death of Christ? As Christ upon the cross expiated sin, so Christ in the supper

* Anyrald, Thes. Salmur.

mortifies sin by his Spirit, and purgeth those iniquities which are as a veil against the face of God and the joy of our souls. Faith acts more lively against its enemy, when it considers that the blood was shed for the soul, as to justify, so to sanctify. As there must be a removal of those humours which lurk in the body, whereby the vital principle is stifled, and growth rebated, so there must be a removal of those spiritual diseases which hinder the raising our heads higher towards heaven.

(2.) Nourishment of the soul. In regard of the insensible decay of the spirits of the body, there is need of a continual supply to recruit them, and keep them up in their due vigour; our souls stand in no less need of being succoured by a feast of fat things full of marrow. The flesh hath its provisions, and grace must have hers. In the nourishment of the body, the meat, by the vital heat in the stomach, is turned into the substance of the body; so by a believing participation of Christ in the sacrament, we are turned into the image of Christ, and nourished up by it to eternal life. His flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed, John vi. 65; he is given to us as nourishment: 'Take, eat, This is my body,' as nourishment to be incorporated with us; the bread is the sign of his body, and his body is the bread of the soul; the element conveys vigour to the body, and the thing signified strength to the soul, and recruits it with new spirits. What bread and wine do physically convey to the body, which is strength, comfort, nourishment, that doth the body and blood of Christ by faith convey to the soul, quickening, comforting, strengthening, cherishing grace. As the new creature is brought into being only by the power of Christ, so it is maintained by the blood of Christ only, and Christ hath provided this to be both our meat and our medicine, our food and our antidote, to revive our soul, and cure and prevent our diseases, to repair the decays which the remainders of sin and evil humours cause in our souls. It is not a naked remembrance; that would be in breaking the bread, and pouring out the wine, by which actions are signified the death of Christ; but nutrition is intended, therefore the bread is eaten, the wine drunk; our bodies need daily bread; the maintaining the life cannot consist with a total abstinence from food. Who but a madman would be so cruel to himself as to deny his faint body its ordinary relief, and its stated meals? Are any of our souls so fat and flourishing as to need no more spiritual food; are we grown up to the degree and state of angels who never eat nor drink? If we would not contemn the food of our bodies, which common providence prepares for us, have we any more reason to contemn the food of our souls, which rich grace provides for us? As we cannot expect healthful nourishment from corn, but as dressed according to various methods, so we cannot expect nourishment from Christ but in the way of his own appointments.

(3.) Increase and exercise of grace. Christ is the storehouse and fountain of all the treasures of life and peace, but his ordinances are the channel. Though Christ hath treasures to enrich us, yet he will choose the way of conveyance himself. By virtue of that principle whereby bodies live, they grow up to that stature which is convenient for them, and their growth is promoted by those means which maintain life in them. It is eaten, it is drunk, to promote our growth as well as maintain our lives. Grace is increased by Christ; he is the finisher as well as the author, Heb. xii. 2; and therefore the increaser of it, laying by degrees one stone upon another, till he completes it by the top stone; dressing the plant to a greater flourishing. This ordinance, therefore, is of frequent use for the building up and bringing forth more lively and juicy fruits. The elements, bread and wine, are not only nourishing, but strengthening, and so is the thing signified by them.

Some speak of a garden of balsam trees in Egypt which bring forth no fruits unless they be watered with a neighbouring fountain, wherein the blessed virgin was reported often to have washed our Saviour. It is true of grace, the balsam-tree in the soul, which will not thrive unless watered by the blood of Christ. Faith is increased thereby; as the oftener the word is heard, so the oftener sacraments are used, the more doth faith thrive. The same arguments which first persuaded us to assent to the truth of a thing, the more they are impressed upon us, the more sensible they are made to us, the more they do continue and increase that persuasion; and according to the thriving of faith is the vigour of all other graces. Where should we find this vigour for our graces, but in the body and blood of him who is the fountain of all grace to us? This was instituted, indeed, while our Saviour was mortal, but it conveys a spiritual immortality to our souls, because it receives its strength and efficacy from his resurrection. It is here the smoking flax may rise into a flame, and the bruised reed find its support and repair; and the spirit may be renewed even in the infirmities of the flesh. If we come with weak grace and strong breathings, we may return with strong grace and full satisfaction. Do not little sparks need frequent and gentle blasts to blow them up? Proficiency is our duty; we must press forward towards the mark, we must run our race; it is our duty, then, to take our *viaticum*, or provision, to enable us thereto. Why do we come to the word but to have grace either wrought or increased? Why should any believer, then, neglect the other means of God's appointment? Sacraments are the marts wherein we trade for an increase of our stock, as well as the word. Since, therefore, we are subject to decays, and liable to changes and wants in our spiritual condition, we stand in need of a rooting and establishing ordinance. If we would maintain the fire, it must not be by removing the fuel. If our stomachs be lost, it is a sign our growth is stopped. Is our faith so strong that it needs no further confirmation; our grace mounted to that height that it needs no further steps; our desires so sharp as that they cannot receive any keener edge? It is an ordinance wherein grace is much exercised, and more unitedly about its object, Christ; and were there no other advantage than this, to have an opportunity to strike up all our graces together, our clasping faith and our melting repentance, our flaming love and our nimble desires, it were enough to make the ordinance itself desirable to a Christian, since there is an unspeakable comfort in the very sound of him. But so excellent an ordinance cannot be without a more excellent benefit.

(4.) Sense and assurance of love often comes in by it. Wine is comforting. In no ordinance is Christ so particularly applied, 'Take, eat, this is my body.' It concerns Christ to make them welcome to his table that come with hearts thirsting for him. Christ was known by the breaking of bread, when the disciples knew him not before in his opening the Scripture, Luke xxiv. 30, 31. Gladness attended the keeping of the passover, 2 Chron. xxx. 21, 26. Great joy, then, in Jerusalem, not in the neglect of it. The primitive Christians continued in their 'gladness of heart' by 'breaking bread from house to house,' Acts ii. 46. Much more surely by breaking bread with Christ in the supper. It is the most probable time of the Spirit's performing the great office, which is to bring things to remembrance, when we are engaged in an ordinance, whose chief design is to bring Christ in his expiatory death to remembrance; when the office of the Spirit, and the end of the institution meet together, it is the most likely time for the Spirit to exercise his office and join in with the end of the sacrament, to shew the high and heavenly things of our Saviour. There is a sweetness in a promise, but more in a promise drawn into covenant with all its ramifications.

God's seal, as well as his oath, is for confirmation ; his word is sufficient, but lest that should be staggered at, he hath added his oath ; if that should leave any doubts, he hath fixed his seal, all which are the highway to a comfortable assurance. The sin within us, and the devil without us, are always raising vapours, which gather into clouds, filling us with doubts, and hindering the sense of God's comfortable face, staggering our hopes, and making us question that love which is grounded upon so many promises. God hath in this given us a pledge of his love, and a ground of assurance, when we have Christ printed clearer in his sufferings and his love, visibly represented as made a curse in our stead, a sacrifice bearing his sins in our body, and expiating them by his blood, and this Christ taken into our souls, and pleaded to God as our security. Thus hath Christ given his body for us, and left his body with us as a pawn, a pledge for all we want, for all the good we can hope for. Sense of his love must be great, when the soul considers that his blood satisfied God, and may well satisfy it. When we eat and drink believably, our souls delight themselves in fatness. And as the heart of God was satisfied with him upon the cross, so the heart of a Christian is often replenished by him at a sacrament. What the gospel presents in words, the sacrament doth in signs ; what the word presents to the ear, the supper doth to the eye, to the taste, that we may have comfort come in at all our senses. How often have drooping spirits met with comfort in the very action ; and met with hidden manna in sacramental bread, like a glorious Christ in a human body, and have had a full sense of a Saviour's love accompanying the visible representation of it ? How often have his people heard him in it speak peace, peace ; speak peace to them, and breathe peace in them, and kiss them with the kisses of his mouth ? How often have their consciences been pacified, and their creeping joy found an elevation ? There have been mutual glances ; Christ hath struck a beam upon the soul, imprinted a clearer stamp of love, and the soul hath clasped its arms about a Saviour. And is such an ordinance fit to be neglected ?

(5.) Union with Christ is promoted. As the bread and wine, being turned into our nature, become one with us, so the body and blood of Christ, being by faith turned into our substance, make us one with Christ. As the bread and wine are physically united to us, so we are spiritually united to Christ, Christ incorporating himself with us in a sacrament. He was our surety upon the cross, he is our advocate in heaven ; and incorporated with us in the supper in a spiritual, not a transubstantiate manner : 'I in them,' John xvii. 23, 26. Can we too often clasp about him ; can the union be often renewed, and become too close and strait ?

Use 1. How much is the neglect, if not contempt, of this institution to be bewailed ! How sad a thing is it, that many for many years have turned their backs upon breasts full of milk ! How hath it been regarded as if it were an abrogated law, a seal out of date, torn off from the covenant, as though the institutions of Christ were miserable comforters, and it were a despicable privilege to receive entertainment at God's table.

(1.) It concerns such to inquire, whether the reasons of their neglect be valid against a positive command. Since it is a command, *Do this*—not only to remember Christ, but to remember Christ in this method, *Do this in remembrance of me*—it is worthy their consideration, whether the ground of their neglect be such as will bear a divine scrutiny, and sustain the force of God's inquisition. They must be evasions past understanding that can hold water against a divine order. Though it may not always be frequented, yet it is not always to be omitted. No excuse was valid against the passover, but uncleanness or a journey, and that not for an annual but a month's

omission, Num. ix. 13. But what light excuses have we to keep us off from a feast with God for many years, which we would not admit of to hinder us from a feast with man ?

(2.) Was it appointed to be neglected ? Did Christ take such care to institute it, and we take care to avoid it ? did he give such a positive order for no other end but that we should never regard it ? can we say we value his word, when we slight his seal ? is your faith so strong in his word, that it needs no strength from the seal ? was not the faith of the apostles as strong at that time of institution as any man's, or at least in some few days after ? Yet it was not left *ad libitum*: you *may* do this, but *do* it. Christ is a better judge of the weakness of our hearts, our proneness to forgetfulness, the difficulty to preserve faith as well as obtain it. And he instituted it as an act of kindness as well as authority, that it might be observed, not neglected by us. Were there no end of it, but only an act of his will, acceptance is a civility we owe our Saviour. If he had said, I pray you, do this, could you have refused to him that died for you ; could you refuse it to him that endured the wrath of God for you ? What had become of you if he had not died ; all the angels could not have removed that load of wrath that lay upon you ? If it be a command to do it, to neglect it is a sin ; for what is sin but a breach of God's command ? It is a direct command, not drawn by consequence, as plain a command as any in the decalogue, 'Do it in remembrance of me ;' not, may do it, do it if you will, or, do it when you will.

(3.) How can such free themselves from unworthy reflections upon Christ ? It is either an act of wisdom or folly in him. If of wisdom, why are we so foolish as not to observe it ; if of folly, why do we at all believe in him whom we count a foolish Saviour ? It was either an act of love in him or disdain. If of love, why are we so ungrateful as not to regard it ? if of disdain, why should we depend upon a person whom we virtually charge with leaving a mocking ordinance to us just before his going out of the world ? We must either quite discard our faith, or discard our neglect. There is no doubt but it was both an act of wisdom and love in Christ ; the wisdom that conducted the course of his life was not absent from him when he was so near his death, nor had his love which animated him to death the next day, forsaken him the night before ; had he left his love, he might have prevented his death. To neglect it, then, is to vilify Christ's institution, to disparage his skill and care of his church, as though there were no need of any representations of him, or as if something might have been ordered better. It is to charge Christ with a trifling institution, it is to charge him with the greatest folly, that when he was to encounter with wrath and death, he could not find something else to busy himself about ; that he could not pitch upon a better thing to recommend to you, as a token of his care, and a support for your souls. If we will thus undertake to prescribe Christ what he should do, this is to be, not his servants to be guided by him, but his lords to rule him, and give him his instructions, as though he were our, not his Father's, ambassador. How can we hope for the benefits he hath purchased, while we cast such reflections upon him, as if he were busy about just nothing ?

(4.) Is it neglected because the elements are so mean, and the thing so easy in itself ? Had any Israelite neglected to turn his eye upon the brazen serpent, the poison in his blood had digged his grave. What might they not have objected against it ; what good can a look upon a brazen figure do my wounds ? I want a plaster for my sore, more than a cast of my eye. Brass will naturally inflame my distemper, not assuage it. Can the picture of a serpent cure the biting of a real one, and at such a distance ? This and

more might have been objected against that, than against this ; but such logic would have destroyed the dispute. Or is it easy, and therefore fit to be neglected ? It was our Saviour's mercy to make it so easy, who might have imposed harder conditions on us ; and shall we slight his tenderness, who was loath to burden us, and careful to relieve us ? What would have been said, had it been as painful as the circumcising the flesh, or as distasteful as the bitter herbs of the passover ? It is true, it is common bread, it is common wine in itself ; but it is consecrated bread, and consecrated wine in its use. It hath the stamp of Christ upon it, as the wax taken out of the shop hath the seal of the conveyer, which the purchaser would not part with for all the wax left behind in the hands of the seller.

(5.) Or do we think Christ is come again, that we neglect it ? The command was dated from the night before his death, and is to be in force till he return again. Was it his resurrection that is meant by his coming ? Would Christ at such a time appoint an ordinance, that was to last but three days, and never like to be put in practice after his institution ? Or was it till he came in Spirit ? He was come in Spirit at Pentecost, before the apostle in the text urged the institution ; therefore *come again* cannot be meant of that. The ordinance then had ceased before Paul writ to the Corinthians ; and he would never have restored an abrogated institution, who was so vehement an opposer of an abrogated ceremonial law. Or till he come in Spirit into the soul ? Was Christ in Spirit in none of the Corinthians, who were a church of great graces and great gifts, as well as great corruptions ? Paul rectifies their corrupt mixtures, but exempts not any from a due observance.

(6.) Why doth any one neglecter of it, who hath faith, observe any other command or institution ? Those that make not conscience of all known duties, make conscience of none. He that offends in one point, breaks the whole law ; he that contemns one point of the gospel, violates the authority of the whole. I do not see how any part of the Christian religion would be dear to any who have so slight a regard to that which may claim an equality with any ordinance, and a precedency in our esteem in some respects, in regard of the positive command of our Saviour, the time when he appointed it, and the length of its duration, 'Till I come.' I doubt the apostasies of many, and the unfruitfulness in the lives of professors, may be charged upon either the neglect of this, or an unworthy carriage in it. He hath little desire to gain Christ, or preserve Christ, that will have him in his own way, and not in Christ's way. What we desire, we should take a course to enjoy in the method of that person who only can fulfil our desires.

(7.) Or is it unfitness that is the cause of neglect ? Hath any man heard of repentance, and faith, and holiness, and yet hath nothing of them ? What a miserable case is this ! If you are not fit for this ordinance, you are not fit for heaven. What will you do when you come to die ? He that is not fit for the supper, is not fit for heaven, for the marriage day of the lamb. Is not the unfitness from sloth, laziness, and unwillingness to take pains with the heart ? If any man can say he hath used all his industry, by prayer and repentance, to fit himself for heaven and for the ordinance, and done what he can, God requires no more than men are able to do. If unfitness to come be dangerous, is not a total omission as dangerous ? Will you plead your unfitness to God at the last day, as an excuse for disobedience ? What an excuse will this be, Lord, I would have been often at the supper, but I was unfit, I gave way to a constant course of temptation, I never had an eagerness of desire for it, I was torn with various distractions, I let sin reign in me, the care of a farm or a trade diverted my thoughts from it ;

what self-condemning excuses are those? You know how firm they were to stave off the anger of the king from those that made them in the Gospel to excuse their not coming to his wedding, Mat. xxii. Or is it a perfect fitness that is not to be found within the circumference of the earth? You will make God a hard master under the gospel, to receive none but those that have a perfect fitness for him. If any would be perfectly fit, the course is not to reject the means for it. Diseases can never be cured with a slighting, but by using the remedy.

(8.) Consider what you lose, and what danger you incur. Whatsoever benefits are stored up in a sacrament we lose by neglects; whatsoever obedience is in observing it, we lose the reward of; we lose the fruit of his love in it, and we deny the obligation of his authority, and the honour of obedience to it. God will not calmly and coldly suffer neglects. To detract from any ordinance of Christ, is in part to diminish the Scripture, to deny part of his will and testament. Why was the neglect of the Jewish sacraments so severely punished, that the persons were cut off, not by a civil punishment, but by the hand of God, as the Jews interpret it? Is not the grace offended in ours as good as was in theirs? Ours may claim the precedence of them in benefits, and therefore should in estimation. It is much, that when Christ hath graciously condescended to us, we should not thankfully ascend to our own privilege. Well, then, why shall not the inconceivable love of a Saviour move you to the obedience of a command so easy, so beneficial, so alluring? You are bound to profess Christ, to remember him in your lives, who remembered you at his death. Do you think yourself his members within the great charter of salvation which he hath purchased and sealed? How can any be members of his corporation, and disobey his orders? Are you not entered by baptism; have you not vowed and promised your allegiance; and is the neglect of a known and positive command the way to perform it? Consider it is a law made by the purchaser of our salvation.

Use 2. Is of exhortation to observe it, and that frequently. Though a dying Saviour is remembered, yet a living Saviour is sought for in it; and shall not we be as ready to seek a living Christ in the sacrament, as the women were to seek a dead Christ in the sepulchre? Mat. xxviii. 1. The neglect of it doth speak some light thoughts of it. Is it because of the meanness of the elements? We may as well despise a great Redeemer, because clothed with the infirmities of a mortal body, as despise the spiritual representations of him, because clothed with the meanness of earthly elements. God doth always delight to convey great things through mean mediums. Gideon shall route a Midianitish army with potsherds, with earthen pitchers; and the jaw-bone of an ass shall be more successful in the hand of Samson, than a massy sword in the hand of Goliath. By the weakness of the cross God redeems the world; by the foolishness of preaching he converts a world, and conveys through earthen vessels a treasure wherewith to enrich his people, and a strength that makes confusion in the kingdom of darkness; and by these elements, mean in appearance, he doth nourish the believer, still making those ordinances the pipes of his invisible grace. Or is it for want of a disposition? If there be no faith at all, the cause is sad; if there be no fitness for heaven, there is no present fitness to converse with Christ in his supper. Or is it but a weak faith? The more need then of a strengthening ordinance. Would we have a more elevated frame of heart? The way to ascend to the top of a pinnacle is not to run from the steps which lead to it. Who is sufficient for these things? But the more spiritually sensible we are of our own insufficiency, the more con-

fidence we may have in the sufficiency of a Saviour; the more sensible we are of our disease, the more confident of the skill and affection of our physician, and the more we should apply ourselves to his prescriptions.

Let us consider some questions.

(1.) Will any believer be guilty of disobedience to the author of his faith? *Do this*, is a word of command, Luke xxii. 19. Not left *ad libitum*, it is not, *you may if you will*, as was said before; but *do it* in remembrance of me. Do it, if you will remember me; I will account you no rememberers of me, unless you do it. The command was given to the apostles, but to deliver it to the church: 1 Cor. xi. 23, 'For I have received of the Lord that which also I have delivered unto you.' We must obey the commands given to the apostles, so far as they are practicable by us, as well as think to share in the comforts of the prayer Christ put up for us and his apostles, John xvii. 20. The influence of what was spoken in their presence extended to all believers, and the observance of what was instituted in their presence is to be regarded by all believers. God would not only have the Israelites cleanse themselves, but be circumcised and eat the passover, when they were upon the borders of Canaan, before he would bless them with the victory, Joshua v. 2, 10. God would have them renew covenant with him, in the way of his own appointment, before they should have possession of Canaan. Suppose there were no benefit to be expected, 'though every institution of Christ is a mark of his love, as well as a fruit of his authority,' yet doth not the greatness of Christ's love deserve our tenderness of his authority in his commands? If they had nothing of privilege but all of duty, love to Christ would make us often remember him, and obedience would make our love choose the way of his own ordering, and not ways at our own pleasure. *Deus voluit* is a sufficient motive, and we cannot free ourselves from the censure of disobedience, if we observe not his commands in the same manner that he enjoins them, in their circumstances as well as their substance.

(2.) Is Christ so mean a friend as not to be remembered? The memory of a good friend should be very precious. Is there any friend we have in the world can outstrip him in affection, and deserve a greater share in our first-born thoughts? What was ever more advantageous to us than the death of Christ, by whom we have our life; than the agonies of Christ, to which we owe our freedom from the wrath to come? Do we not remember our own benefit in remembering our gracious benefactor, who bore our sorrows that we might enter into his joy? groaned under the curses due to us, that we might triumph in his Father's love and in his own glory; who emptied himself to fill us, and received the wrathful strokes to free us; who took our sins upon himself, and cast upon us the robe of his righteousness; bore the load of our transgressions to enrich us with the treasures of his merits; endured our death to procure our life, and hung upon our cross to advance us to sit upon his throne. Is it not a great unkindness to be unwilling frequently to remember so cordial and choice a friend? Besides, is it not fit to remember him frequently, who remembers believers perpetually? He regarded such in his last prayer, he remembers such in heaven to plead for them, he remembers them under their bespotting corruptions. Shall not believers remember him, who hath laid in his blood a perfect foundation for their perfect happiness? He remembers them that were enemies, and have too much enmity still; and shall not they remember him who is a clear and perfect friend? He bears their names upon his breast, as Aaron did the ten tribes on the ephod, Exod. xxviii. 12, and remembers even those who have crucified him; and shall not they remember Christ who were

never wronged by him? Should we not rejoice to see the rainbow in the clouds, which is a sign of God's, securing covenant against a destroying deluge? And shall we neglect the signs of God's securing covenant against an overflowing wrath?

(3.) Why should we not often be in those ways where we may meet with our best friend? Certainly he is as graciously present in this as in any other ordinance. He is present with us in observing every thing which he hath commanded, Mat. xxviii. 20; and shall this be without a more special presence, when it was instituted for a more special remembrance of him? He is present symbolically, as a man by his picture; he is present spiritually, the soul sees him by faith, as Abraham saw his day at a distance, and that with joy; he is present by his efficacy, as the sun is present in the earth, though many hundred miles distant in its body. 'This is my body,' 'this is my blood;' as sure as this is bread and this is wine, so surely by faith are you partakers of my body and blood in this ordinance. Can this be said of any other ordinance? Where is Christ so particularly present, so closely applied as in this?

(4.) Have you no graces that need strengthening? Have we not need of all the means to strengthen that faith, which we shall have all the need of in the hour of death, to keep our souls from fainting under the stroke? Is it not a desirable thing to have the benefits of Christ often applied to us, and our faith confirmed? Is all our leanness removed, that we need no more marrow and fatness? Are we so provided for heaven, that we need no more *viaticum* in our journey thither? Who would come but seldom to his stated meals? He that would fast one day would scarce fast two, but by force. We are yet in a journey, and we need strength to go forward; we are beset with diseases, and we need medicines to cure us; we are often faint, and we need cordials to revive us. Are our souls so fully established, our affections so ready at our call, as not to need sensible objects sometimes to raise them? A vigorous fancy, helped by the sight of a picture, mounts to a greater activity; so doth a spiritual faith. Can you, then, too often embrace the cross, drink down the blood of Christ, and put your hands into his wounds? Is your faith so hearty, that it needs no cordials; your love so hot, that it needs no breath for an higher flame; your hopes so certain, that they do not sometimes reel; and your obedience so quick, that it needs no spur; and your standing so secure, that it needs no further settlement? It is certain, that as we would have faith, we must attend upon converting ordinances, so if we would have strength of faith, we must frequent strengthening institutions. How would this Sun, shining upon our souls in his own orb, enrich us with his heat and light, suffer nothing to stand before it, and put out all those lesser fires, those foolish desires which aspire to other things, and weaken the soul? After the Israelites were circumcised, and had eaten the passover, then did Christ, as captain of the Lord's host, appear to Joshua to encourage his heart, and strengthen his hands against those enemies in Canaan, by which our spiritual enemies are represented, Joshua v. 7, 10, 14. It is by a frequent exercise of faith, according to the methods of Christ, that believers would be as lions (as Chrysostom saith) breathing fire terrible to the devils themselves. Have you not found your own experience, or at least the experience of others, bear witness to this? How often hath the empty soul been filled, the palsy hand cured, the thirsty heart satisfied, the feeble knees strengthened, a creeping love changed its pace, and a cloudy soul been brightened? The more believing at a sacrament, the more vigorous is the faith afterwards. As in eating corporal food, by the assimilation of meat to our substance by the chemistry of nature, and converting

it into blood and spirits, the body is strengthened; so by the feeding upon Christ by faith, the soul is strengthened, and Christ becomes more and more mystically incorporate in the believer, 'Christ in them the hope of glory,' John xvii. 23; I in them, and thou in me.'

(5.) Why will any true believer gratify Satan? The motions to hinder those that are gracious, must either be from God or Satan; from God they cannot be, who is no enemy to the ordinance he hath appointed for them. It cannot be thought that God should deery his own institution, or call back his own invitation, or discourage a believer from the remembrance of his Son in that ordinance, which hath been enjoined for that end. The Spirit in his motions acts according to the word, not contrary to it. They must then be from the devil, who is an enemy not to be listened to. He endeavours to hinder the believer from the most spiritual duties, whereby he may gain the greatest profit. He kindles our corruptions, shoots in his temptations, fills us with scruples, exhorts us to omit, defer anything to stave us off from that which is the strengthening of our souls, and a weakening of his kingdom. Swallow not therefore this poison; spit it out, lest you please the devil, and displease the Redeemer. How will the devil triumph if he can keep you in a constant omission of a known duty! If the frequent attendance be a means to strengthen grace, the neglects are a means to weaken; and the devil rejoices in the decays of grace, next to preventing any grace at all. He feeds himself with hopes that at last he may make such utterly insensible.

(6.) Why should any believer deny to pay Christ the debt of thankfulness for his great love, in that way which he hath appointed? It is a thanksgiving, a thankful remembrance, therefore anciently called the *eucharist*. It is appointed as a feast to rejoice before God for the benefits we profess to enjoy by the death of Christ; as the eating of the sacrifice offered to an idol was a profession that all that they had came from the kindness and powerful influence of that idol. Shall not our souls be filled with hosannas for the greatest mercy that can be bestowed upon us, viz. a redemption from guilt, death, hell, and the wrath of God? Shall we refuse a thankful acceptance of that honour to sit at his table, and to sup with our prince? Would not that person be accounted ungrateful, that should delight in the picking of straws when his king calls him to his presence?

To conclude. Let the benefits of this ordinance persuade every believer to a frequency in it. They must needs be great and desirable upon a worthy and believing partaking, because the sin and danger are dreadful in an unworthy approach. If indeed we have no enemies to conquer, no weakness to strengthen, no sin to trouble us, no temptations to surround us, no damps to smother our assurance, no ebbs in our graces, no totterings in our faith, no coolings in our love, no emptiness to be filled, no doubts to be resolved; if we are in heaven, and are as angels in assumed bodies, then we are lifted above the end and intendment of it; but this is no man's case in the world. It is a command, to neglect it therefore is to despise his authority; it is for our good, to neglect it therefore is to contemn his mercy; his institutions are attended with promises, to neglect them is to deny his truth.

We have handled two doctrines from the words. There is one more yet behind, concerning the *duration* of this ordinance; from the last clause, 'You shew the Lord's death till he come.'

There is especially a twofold coming of Christ mentioned in Scripture.

1. His coming in the flesh; 2, his coming to judgment. Both mentioned

Heb. ix. 28, 'Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and he shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation.' The one was to bear our sins, the other to glorify our souls; the one to expiate our guilt, the other to present us to God without any filth; the one to begin salvation, the other to perfect it; the one to seal the promises, the other to perform them; the one to put an end to the remembrance of sin, by substituting himself as a sacrifice in the room of the legal ones, whereby there was a remembrance of sin every year, the other to put an end to the fruit of sin, afflictions and sufferings of his people.

It is not his coming in the Spirit which is here meant; this had not consisted with the interest of Christ, the wisdom of Christ, or the end of the sacrament.

(1.) Not with the interest of Christ. Christ came in Spirit after his ascension, at the time of the liberal effusion of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles, Acts ii., which was his coming to them as he had promised: John xiv. 18, 'I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you.' Would he so solemnly assemble the apostles at such a time, when that wrath, which he saw marching out against him, called for the employment of all his thoughts, and his greatest care in the management of that work? When it was come to that issue, would he neglect his present interest and business to settle an ordinance so short-lived as the space of fifty days, when most of that time he intended to comfort them by his personal presence after his resurrection? It had not consisted with his interest at that time to employ himself about that which should so suddenly expire.

(2.) Nor with the wisdom of Christ. To institute that so solemnly for his remembrance, that should be of so little use. It was to remember him in his absence all the time he should be in his Father's kingdom. A greater absence than that of twelve days must be meant; for he was absent from them only during the time of his lying in the grave, and the time between his ascension and the descent of the Spirit, if by coming here be meant his coming in the effusion of the Spirit: Acts i. 3, 'He was seen of them forty days, speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God' (it is likely he was with one or other of them every day in that space), which, it is probable, were not to be put in execution till the coming of the Spirit, which they were to wait for at Jerusalem, which was to endue them with power from on high, Luke xxiv. 49, Acts i. 8. And though after the descent of the Spirit, they 'continued in breaking of bread,' yet not before, but only 'in prayer and supplication' (Acts i. 14) for the power of the Holy Ghost, which was to commission them. And would Christ take such care to have a church before the fall of the Jewish church, and enable his apostles by his Spirit in so miraculous a manner to settle his commands among those that should believe in him; and this, which is one of the greatest and most in favour to the church, so lately instituted, and for the commemoration of the fundamental benefit, to expire just after the promulgation of it? That did not cease at the coming of Christ in the Spirit, which we have no evidence that it was put in practice from the time of the first institution till the coming of the Spirit. Did it consist with the wisdom of our Lord to give a command which was never to be practised?

(3.) Nor with the end of the supper. It was to be done *in remembrance*. How could they in so short a time forget him, in whose hands and sides they had seen the marks of the nails and spear? How could they forget him whose death they had seen, and whom they had enjoyed again by a miraculous resurrection? Besides, the Spirit was come, and so this ordinance ceased before Paul writ to the Corinthians, and he who had been so

vehement an opposer of an abrogated ceremonial law, would never have restored an abrogated institution.

Nor is this coming again to be understood of the Spirit's coming to a particular person. Then,

(1.) As soon as ever men come to be fit for this ordinance, they must waive it. If the coming of Christ here spoken of be his coming in Spirit to a soul, as soon as ever he is come in Spirit they ought not to observe it, because they would break the command which is limited to such a time, the time of his coming. The Spirit comes in the work of regeneration, in the work of faith. To what purpose did Christ institute this, if the only subjects capable of it were *ipso facto* deprived of it, when they were first in a capacity for it? None receives good from this ordinance but those that have faith. Indeed, men in a crowd may press upon Christ and touch him, yet only that person that touches his garments and takes the elements by faith, receives virtue from him. What a madness it is to feed a dead man; and if he should be restored to life to deprive him of the means and nourishment to preserve that life.

(2.) It would then be instituted only for the refuse of the world, for such as had no mind to remember him, nor could remember him with any affection to him or comfort to themselves, since they were alienated from him by their unbelief. We cannot suppose that Christ, that night wherein he was betrayed, should take care only of his enemies. He prayed for his disciples, not for the world; he gives the supper to them, and in them, as the foundation of the church, to all that were to believe on him, not to the world. It is the second coming of Christ to judgment that is here meant, when he comes in perfect majesty to bestow a perfect glory; when he shall come 'in that manner as he was taken up into heaven,' Acts i. 11; when the remembrance of his death shall be swallowed up in the vision of his person, and fruition of the ripe and complete fruit of his sufferings. In the mean time it is a standing memorial of the sufferings of our Saviour.

The doctrine then is:

Doct. The Lord's Supper is a lasting and continuing institution, not to be put down at the pleasure of any men. It will not be repealed till Christ come. Another gospel is not to be expected, Gal. i. 6, 7, &c.; and therefore while the gospel endures, the appendixes, the institutions annexed to it, will endure. The times of the gospel are called often in Scripture 'the last days;' no other dispensation is to supersede it, and the ordinances in it are immoveable things, not to be shaken till Christ comes. He is not yet come, the institutions therefore he transmitted to us by the apostles are still of use. Nothing can put a period to them, but the coming of Christ, which no man can say is yet accomplished. The ordinances of Christ are like the pillar of fire and the cloud which guided the Israelites in their journey through the wilderness, and did not withdraw from them till they entered into Canaan. When the church shall be perfected, when Christ shall appear to put the crown upon the head of the glorified church, and bring it into the promised inheritance, the clouds of ordinances will vanish; there will be no more need of them, the ends of them will be completed; there will be no weak grace to need strengthening, nor any indwelling sin to need mortification. In the reformation of the church, prophesied of in Rev. xxi. 3, 'The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them.' The ordinances are not to be abolished; while God hath a tabernacle among men, he will have a worship, an instituted worship to help us in our natural worship. The tie of homage the creature owes to God cannot be unloosed. If a worship, then some modes and rites of worship. The tabernacle was the place of worship. This cannot be meant of a state of glory in heaven, because, ver. 1., it is a 'new

Jerusalem which comes down from heaven,' a state distinguished from the state of glory in heaven. In the time of the reformation of the church, which is there promised, the Lamb is said to be the light of the church: Rev. xxi. 23, 'The Lamb is the light thereof.' Christ is always called a lamb in allusion to the paschal lamb, and in that title, his death as a sacrifice is always included. If the lamb, as a sacrifice, be the light of the city in that glorious state which the church doth expect in the full and thorough reformation, the memorials of him as a lamb, and so the memorials of his death, will be preserved till earth give place to heaven. And whereas it is said, ver. 22, 'There shall be no temple,' *i.e.* no human and legal ceremonies, but pure ordinances. And 'the city had no need of the sun and of the moon to shine in it.' Men shall not serve God according to the equinoxes and the course of the moon, as the Jews had their passover about the vernal equinox in March, and the observations of the new moon to shew to them the times of worship.* There shall be no earthly constitutions, inventions of man, anything that smells of the legal ceremonies, but God shall be glorious in his own institutions, and the Lamb shall be the *λύχνος*, the candle of it. The simple institutions of Christ shall be the light of the church. All those ordinances which signify to us the love of the Lamb, the death of the Lamb, the benefits by that death, shall be kept up in purity and vigour. In the reformation of the church the ordinances shall no more cease than they did in the second temple, which was a reformed church after their captivity in Babylon, and so reformed that they never ran again to idolatry. But the ordinances of God continued in the temple till the coming of the Messiah to tabernacle among men; so in the reformation from the idolatries and corruptions of antichrist, which will be, as it were, the erection of a second temple, the ordinances shall continue till the coming of Christ to judgment. Christ intimates the continuation of this ordinance in the church till the consummation of all things, and the investing his people with the glory he had promised them, in his words after the institution of it: Mat. xxvi. 29, 'I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, till I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom,' which he speaks to shew the nearness of his death, and to comfort them under the apprehensions of it, assuring them they should be with him in his Father's kingdom, partakers of his glory. It also implies that no other institution was to intervene between that time and their being with him in his Father's kingdom. The communication of himself should then be in a new manner. But till that time they must not expect any converse with him but in those ways he had settled. The nearer Christ's coming is, the more will his ordinances be in practice. When the Israelites were upon entering into Canaan, circumcision and the passover were celebrated, which had been omitted all the time of their wilderness condition.

1. All the ordinances of Christ are to continue in his church, then certainly this. The institutions of Christ in the gospel are said to be immoveable, such as cannot be shaken: Heb. xii. 26, 27, 'He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but the heavens. And this word, yet once more, signifies the removing of things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.' 'Yet once more,' Hag. ii. 6; for it is taken out of that place, the apostle following the Septuagint translation. *Once more*, supposeth that that time being past, there should be no more change of laws in the church. The old institutions under the law are called *τὰ σαλευόμενα*, things that are shaken or fluctuating, uncertain. The evangelical institutions are opposed to those, as things that cannot be shaken, *τὰ μὴ σαλευόμενα*. *Once more*, clearly intimates that the

* Grot. in loc.

ordinances introduced by the Messiah should be unalterable, as long as the scene of the world, heaven and earth, endures. He would change but one time, not many. The new laws of the gospel will not be changed by God's authority, but be left in the same state wherein they were established by the Messiah, and not be subject to change, as the legal administration was. The order appointed by Moses was to be shaken, and give place to a better administration; but the order settled by the Son of God is to stand as firm as a mountain of brass, as the foundations of the earth, or the arch of heaven. If not shaken by God, no reason they should be shaken by man. The faith is said to be 'once delivered to the saints,' Jude 3. Once, *i.e.* unalterably the doctrine of faith is delivered; as God is said 'Once to swear by his holiness,' Ps. lxxxix. 36; once for all, never to be altered. The doctrine of faith, and institutions of the gospel, are monuments of God's grace, not to be demolished or defaced till God puts a period to the world, and wraps up the persons of all his elect in the bosom of Christ. It is his injunction to his apostles, when he commissioned them to teach men to observe all things that he had commanded them; and he promiseth his presence with them in so doing to the end of the world: Mat. xxviii. 20, 'Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.' The things Christ hath commanded, are then to be observed till the end of the world, for he promises his presence with them to the end of the world in the teaching of those things. The things therefore that Christ hath commanded must be taught. If they be not, no men can have any comfortable hopes of the presence of Christ with them. If Christ will have a ministry to the end of the world, he will have a church to the end of the world; if a church, which is the seat of ordinances, then ordinances to the end of the world; if ministers, who are the 'stewards of the mysteries of God,' then mysteries there are to be dispensed to the end of the world. Observe the universality of the subject twice repeated, *all things*, and *whatsoever I have commanded you*. Everything that Christ hath commanded must be taught; everything therefore that Christ hath commanded must endure. Observe also, that the extent of the duration is repeated twice too, *always*, even to the end of the world; it includes also the extent of the duration of the things commanded, because his presence is promised to them in the teaching of whatsoever he commanded. The ordinances therefore of Christ are to be perpetually observed. And they are those evangelical dispensations which are here commanded to be taught and observed, because they are those which Christ, as mediator, hath appointed, 'which I have commanded,' I that have power given me in heaven and earth, for that is the ground of this command: Mat. xxviii. 18, 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; go ye therefore and teach all nations.' And lest any should take upon them to determine the time of their continuance, because the first word, *always*, is *πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας*, he explains what he meant by it, and adds, 'even to the end of the world.' So that it is not meant to the end of the Jewish state, but the end of the frame of heaven and earth. The presence of Christ in the way of his ordinances is here promised. Christ will be present with them after the end of the world, but in another manner of presence than now; a special presence here in the weakness of ordinances, a glorious presence hereafter in the fulness of vision. Observe also, if ministers cannot promise themselves the presence of Christ, but in teaching all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded, other men cannot promise themselves the presence of Christ with them, but in observing all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded; and this institution is one of those *all things*. And since the apostles did

not live to the end of the world, this promise looks further than the persons of the apostles; it looks to the church which they should settle in such order as he had appointed, founded upon such doctrine, and observing such institutions, according to his command; he would be with that church that should observe their doctrine, and preserve it successively to the end of the world. As in his prayer, John xvii. 20, he did not only pray for the apostles then with him, so he doth not promise this only to the apostles then with him, but to the church. All the institutions settled in the Jewish church are often said to be ordinances *for ever*, *i.e.* during that dispensation, till God should give them their passport and send them away. But the gospel ordinances are to be in force till the conclusion of all things in the world.

2. Sacraments were thought by God needful for men in all their several states in the world. Sacraments were judged necessary by God in innocent nature. The tree of life had a sacramental signification of life upon Adam's obedience. Much more in lapsed nature have we need of those sensible things for the support of our faith in the promises of God. After the fall there were various institutions brought in by degrees. Adam, and Abel, and Noah, had their sacrifices as significant of the Messiah promised to them, and expected by them. Abraham had an addition of circumcision. The passover and other rites were added under Moses. The Messiah takes away them and introduceth others which are to continue, since they are the last days wherein God hath spoken to us by his Son, Heb. i. 1, and are not to be thrust out by any other dispensation. Not but these sacraments under the gospel are changeable in their own nature, if it seem agreeable to the good pleasure of God. For there is a difference between natural laws and positive laws; * natural laws do not proceed merely from the will of the lawgiver, positive do. Those things which are evil in their own nature, are not evil because they are prohibited by the will of God, but because they are contrary to a rational creature as rational; so that God cannot dispense with them, for then he would dispense with evil as evil, and so would deny his own righteousness, if he should allow that which is unjust in its own nature. But for positive laws, which are not innate in nature or grace, but proceed from the will and authority of God solely, they may be changed by the will of the lawgiver. So the ceremonial law was changed, because it was neither good nor evil in itself, but had its authority solely from the will of God. But the moral law cannot be changed, because the duties it enjoins are naturally good in themselves, and the things it prohibits are evil in themselves; and this God cannot dispense with, for then he should call good evil, and evil good. But God hath declared he will never change these. The end of all ordinances was to bring the worshippers to real holiness, which is the perfection of the soul; in innocency, to preserve men in it; in lapsed nature, to discover the necessity of it, and the way to it; and therefore they must be observed under every dispensation, for that end for which they were instituted. Now if these rudiments, proportioned to the Jewish infancy, were not to be violated by them under the severe penalty of the soul's being cut off from among the people (which the Jews understand of a cutting off by the hand of God), sure the more noble institutions of the gospel, settled by the Redeemer, being clearer representations of the love he hath shewn to us, and the benefits we may expect from him, stand more stable, and are big with greater motives to persuade men to the use of them, than those under the law, which were grievous in regard of their multitude and chargeableness, and obscure in regard of the distance of the thing signified by them. They may seem to have had more reason to despise the

* Rivet. in Genes. Exercit. xiii. p. 54.

institutions in those several ages, than we to slight the evangelical ordinances, since they are dignified by the more excellent dispensation they are annexed unto. And God always had some conduit-pipes, through which to pour out the blessings of his grace upon the souls of his creatures.

3. All laws once settled are of force till they be repealed by that authority which did enact them. Christ, as Lord of the church, hath power to appoint institutions, and none but he hath power to remove them, and even he hath not power to remove them by any act but by that of his coming. Christ hath settled this till he comes; since his word is past, nothing but his coming can repeal it. His command is therefore in force, and ought to be observed, and it is in force till he comes; so that if an angel from heaven should bring us word of a repeal, we ought not to believe him, because Christ is not come, to which period of time it is to endure. Had it not been a high presumption for any to abolish the ceremonial law among the Jews, till the promised seed was come, which was the period of its duration? Gal. iii. 19. And is it not as high a presumption to look upon gospel institutions as null, before the time appointed for the coming of Christ, to put an end to this scene of things, be fulfilled? But doth not every man who looks upon this, or any other ordinance, as out of date, assume the power of abrogating, as much as in him lies, the laws of Christ. It is the obedience we owe our Lord not to entrench upon his prerogative in the abrogation of his laws, any more than to usurp the authority of enacting any. It is enough it is his law, and while it is so we ought to observe it, till he gives us a dismiss by giving that a repeal. All ordinances have their sanction and establishment from Christ's authority. The first patriarchs, Adam and Noah, lived without circumcision, Abraham without the laws of Moses. But had God commanded the one to be circumcised, as he commanded Abraham and his posterity, and enjoined the other to observe the legal institutions, was his authority to be slighted? Had they not been as much bound to use them as the Israelites were? God never gave power to any man to change his ordinances, or to dispense with them. The passover continued till God superseded it by another institution; circumcision till God changed it into a more easy. The supper on earth must hold, by Christ's authority, till it be changed into the marriage supper of the Lamb, and never-fading delights in heaven; it must hold till earth be left for heaven, elements for substance and the person they represent. Who can upon a better account challenge an exemption from the observance of positive institutions than our Saviour, who had no need of them? Yet how observant was he of them, because they were established by divine authority. So that he calls his submitting to be baptized of John a 'fulfilling of righteousness,' Mat. iii. 15. If therefore we do acknowledge that Christ is come, and that he will come again, and believingly look for this coming of Christ, we ought to acknowledge it by such testimonies as he hath appointed.

4. The covenant is perpetual, and therefore the seals are perpetual.* The covenant, indeed, God made with Abraham and the Israelites, was the same covenant, and perpetual in regard of the substance of it; for God promised to be their God, and that they should be his people, and to give them eternal life, whereof Canaan was a type. But because the Mediator, in whom this covenant had its confirmation, was not yet exhibited, therefore it was not yet perpetual in regard of the accessories, and those institutions which were appointed for the confirmation of their faith in it; as the priesthood, sacrifices, and sacraments, which could not remain, but must be abolished at the coming of the Mediator, the band of the covenant. The rites belonging to

* Zanch. in Hos. ii. 9, pp. 44-36.

that were but 'shadows of things to come;' and when Christ, whom they shadowed, came, the shadows must necessarily pass away, and some others be instituted in the room of them. When the Aaronical priesthood fell, their sacraments fell with it; and the priesthood being changed, the law is changed also. But Christ, being 'a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec,' 'hath an unchangeable priesthood,' Heb. vii. 24. And therefore the seal and laws belonging to that priesthood are unchangeable, and will continue to the end of the world. In the supper, God doth witness that he doth give us the flesh of Christ, and blood of Christ, and unite us to him, and incorporate us with him: and on our parts, by the receiving them, we witness our embracing God's favour, and return to him, and faith in him, and obedience to his law. Since there is no more exhibition of him to be expected in order to eternal life, but God hath summed up all his will in Christ, settled him an everlasting priest, these seals will endure as long as there is any exercise of that office of priest, which will be till his second coming; wherein all his elect shall be perfected, and no more need of sacrifice or intercession. If it were a type of something to come, when the substance is come the shadow should be done away; but it is a memorial of what is past, and no other administration is to succeed in the room of Christ, and therefore it is to be continued till his coming, and resigning all to his Father.

5. The state wherein we are requires the continuance of it, and of other ordinances.

(1.) In regard of our constant decays. Our bodies would moulder to dust were they not daily nourished; and is there not as much need of nourishment for our souls? Our souls need such institutions, as well as our bodies need food. A man may expect as well to grow without food, or that his vine should bring forth fruit without sun, and rain, and dressing, as that while he is in the world he should thrive in grace, that doth not take in the fructifying showers of Christ. Our sin is struggling, and needs something to conquer it; our faith is staggering, and needs something to confirm it; the sin that clogs us must be removed; the grace that burns dim must be brightened. We need pardon, here we may behold it sealed; we need straiter union to Christ, here it is promoted. The conjunction between Christ and a believing soul is as close as between us and the bread we eat, the wine we drink. There is need, while we are in the wilderness of this world, to be fed with manna; when Canaan is possessed, this will cease. We have a journey to go, a battle to fight. Is it not necessary we should, with Jonathan, take some honey by the way to recruit our spirits? God always conveyed his grace by some pipes, and these he hath appointed in the times of the gospel.

(2.) In respect of our weakness. Some intercourse there must be between God and us, if we be happy. Immediately we cannot have it; such communications are reserved for heaven: these are shadows fitted to the weaknesses and dimness of our sense. We could not look steadily upon Christ's glorified body; but we may behold him in a sacrament as in a glass without twinkling. The object is not primarily and immediately presented to our eye; but by the mediation of a glass, we have some broken beams, some glances of his presence. And in those shadows we may see Christ crucified before our eyes, embrace him in our arms, and carry him in our hearts. Our state must be changed from earth to heaven before sacraments can well be abolished. If the sacraments be necessary as seals to confirm the truth of the covenant to us, as pledges of Christ's love and his conducting presence, and as instruments to convey strength, vigour, and all the blessings of the

covenant to the heart, they are therefore needful till the doubting and staggerings of the soul be removed by full vision, and till we are got to the top of the mount of blessing.

Use 1. Christ will always have a church in the world. A church is the seat of ordinances. Privileges conferred by charter suppose a corporation. If Christ hath left a standing legacy, there shall be some persons in the world to whom it shall be paid. It is his royal prerogative to appoint them. He will not be a titular king, without a kingdom, without subjects. Christ will maintain his interest. And since he hath established his ordinances till he come, he will have a generation to serve him in the observance of them till he come. The church and ordinances cannot constantly be separated, though for a time they may, as the Israelites had not circumcision in the wilderness, and the passover also was omitted, but renewed by them before their entrance into Canaan. Yet it will not follow from hence that ordinances must always continue with us. They may be taken from a particular church, though not from the catholic church. God may have a church in the world, when he hath it not in this or that particular nation. Our day may be turned into a black night. Our manna may not always fall. God sometimes takes away his ordinances from a people to pull down the house, and 'pluck a people up by the roots,' 2 Chron. vii. 20. Sometimes he takes away his influences from them. *Urim* and *Thummim* may continue, but he will not answer Saul by them; the house may stand, but darkness may fill it when the glory of God departs: though there be a temple and sacrifices, yet but husks of ordinances only.

2. It is in no man's power to add to, or detract from, Christ's institutions. Not a pin in the temple he will have altered till he gives order. God is a jealous God, and careful of his sovereignty. It is not for any inferior person to alter the stamp and impression the prince commands. None can coin ordinances but Christ, and till he call them in, they ought to be current among us.

3. See Christ's love and bounty. Christ would not leave his people without a durable legacy. As Christ prayed for all that were to believe, so he provides for them. The apostles were not only to have the benefit, but all. He spreads a standing table for his people before he enters into his purchased glory, provides to feed them till he comes to take them home to himself. He entrusted it not to others, leaves it not to the apostles to appoint what they pleased; but writes the bill of fare himself, and directs what dishes we were to feed on till his return.

4. This ordinance must not be contemned. The passover was to be observed, much more the supper settled by Christ. It is to continue till his second coming. Is Christ yet come? Doth not the creation yet groan under vanity, doth not the heaven and the earth look with their old aspect? Have they yet put on new apparel? Doth not the sun run its ancient course? Are there yet the nearest signs of his second coming? Then no signs of the cessation of his institutions. All commands must be kept till the appearing of Jesus Christ, 1 Tim. vi. 14. Certainly then this that is so nobly circumstantiated, let not any man think himself above it upon a conceit of a greater measure of the Spirit. It is an impiety to pretend the Spirit of Christ can overthrow the institutions of Christ, which are to have the same duration in the world with the influence of the Spirit; to pretend that Spirit, whose office it is to bring the things of Christ to remembrance, to overthrow a grand memorial of him, contrary to the design of his mission; this is to set Christ and his Spirit at variance. To 'despise prophesyings' is to 'quench the Spirit,' 1 Thess. v. 19, 20. Will not the despising a great

ordinance of Christ be attended with the same dreadful effect? The Spirit doth not do all things in us without means, but directs us how to use the means, as he did Solomon to build the house.* He that contemns it, after so positive a command of remembering him this way till he comes, regards little Christ's authority, and presumes himself wiser than Christ; as if he could have given him directions how to have settled his church in a better method. Is it not a great ingratitude to God to despise what he commands as a privilege? Were not the apostles men of an extraordinary measure of the Spirit, because of their extraordinary employments? and did they not exercise themselves in the institutions of Christ? How have many proceeded from the slighting of Christ's institutions to the denying the authority of his word; a slighting Christ himself crucified at Jerusalem, to set up an imaginary Christ within them!

5. It is a standing ordinance till he come, no longer. The happiness of believers is great in attendance on the institutions of Christ, but greater afterwards. It is then there will be a full sight of that which is now in dark resemblances. It is then believers shall see the original copy of this picture. It is but till he come; he will not always have his people subject to ordinances, or show himself in a glass, but face to face. Then must this deputed light give place to a greater; then must these shadows fly away when the sun appears. It is a privilege to sit with him at his table here, but a greater to drink of the fruit of the vine new with him in the kingdom of his Father.

* Holinsworth of the Spirit, p. 42.

A DISCOURSE OF THE SUBJECTS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.—1 Cor. XI. 28, 29.

HAVING discoursed of ver. 26, I now proceed to those which I have read. The substance of ver. 27, will come in in handling ver. 29, where the apostle mentions the greatness of the punishment of unworthy receiving; as vers. 26, 27, he had spoken of the greatness of the sin. Something we insisted on the last day, in the discovery of the sinfulness of unbelief, and more will upon the same subject be coincident with what might be spoken in this case. The apostle here exhorts the Corinthians to a worthy participation of that great ordinance of the Lord's Supper, and (1) lays down the rule of self-examination, before their approach, that they might not contract so great a guilt as that of the body and blood of Christ. But if he would not be guilty of the body and blood of Christ, 'let him examine himself.' (2.) The manner of participation: 'So let him eat, and so let him drink.' (3.) He backs and enforceth it with a reason: 'For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks his own damnation.' A great danger is incurred by the neglect of this manner of proceeding.

Let a man, ἑαυτοῦ, ἐξέτασεν. An Hebraism for every man.* The apostle speaks it, saith Grotius, in regard of the disorders which were in the Corinthian church, in matter of discipline. Do not believe, because no censures are passed upon you, and the foundations of government are razed up in your church, that therefore you shall escape punishment for the contempt of those mysteries. No, God requires a worthy receiving, and will punish an unworthy one. So that it is an universal duty upon every Christian that desires to approach the Lord's table, to set upon a serious examination of his heart and life, which the excellency of the mystery in its own nature requires; an excellent ordinance requires a peculiar preparation: every man, not every man in the world, but every man in the church; not every heathen, but every man that pretends a right to the supper.

Examine himself, δοκιμαζέτω. Some understand the word of an artificial examination, as goldsmiths try metals by the touchstone, to discern between

* Estius.

what is true gold and silver, and what is counterfeit; but it is rather to be understood of a judicial trial, a trial of matter of fact, a trial of state, a trial of graces.

1. A trial of grace, whether it be inherent or no. It is a shewing the death of Christ; there must be therefore a search whether those graces which suit the death of Christ, and answer to the ends of it, be in the subject, as repentance, faith, love to God and to our neighbour; whether there be, not a legal, but evangelical worthiness, and a suitableness between the master of the feast and the guest; whether the heart and life agree with the precepts of Christ; what stamp of the Spirit upon the soul and conversation.

2. A trial of the state wherein those graces are. Since the supper is not worthily received, but by an exercise of repentance, faith, and love, it is necessary to inquire into the state of those graces, and their vigour or languor in the soul, that they may be excited to manifest themselves in a suitable carriage to the master of the feast, and the grandeur of the ordinance we are to attend upon.

By this are excluded from this ordinance,

1. All persons incapable of performing this antecedent duty. Either in regard of natural inability, as children, infants, who though anciently in the time of Austin, were admitted to this ordinance, yet against the rule of the apostle, because by reason of the imperfection of their age, they were not capable of performing this necessary duty which was to precede. As children are not the subjects recipient of the supper, because they are not risen to a suitable degree of understanding, so neither are madmen, because they have lost that understanding they had, and the great mysteries of religion must not be exposed to contempt. And in regard of a negligent inability, as ignorant persons who neglect the means of knowledge, or improve them not to furnish themselves with a sufficient stock of knowledge to this end, so a man grown in age may be a child in understanding, and upon the same account is as incapable as a child of this ordinance; men, therefore, are unfit to come without a distinct knowledge of the doctrine of the gospel.

2. All persons who cannot find upon examination anything of a divine stamp upon them in the lowest degree. Such are all unrenewed men, who have not one bruise in their souls, not one breath of smoke and gracious desire towards Christ in their hearts, and consequently all scandalous persons in life, who are as incapable, by their spiritual madness and contracted vicious habits, as men that are mad naturally, by a distemper of their brain. This trial is for the finding fit qualifications for this ordinance, *τι δοκιμον*, something sound and worthy, which such persons cannot upon examination find.

This command of self-examination evidenceth to us,

1. That a Christian may come to the knowledge of his state in grace; otherwise it would be wholly fruitless to examine ourselves. If we may know by the want of saving conditions that we are in a state of nature; we may know by the presence of them, that we are in a state of grace.

2. No necessity of auricular confession; to tell all the secrets of the life to a priest.

So let a man eat of this bread, and drink of this cup. So, not otherwise; it is a hedge planted against every intrusion. So, not without examination, and a fitness upon it. It is not an ordinance appointed for every man; there is a manifest distinction between persons capable of the *word*, and capable of the *supper*. Preaching is to be to every creature, every rational creature, Mark xvi. 15, 16. Unbelievers are capable of the word, believers only of the supper. The one is to bring men into the family, the other to nourish them after their entrance. If any man find himself in a state of

death, let him repent, believe, resolve a new and serious life, and so let him come, not else; for without those he can receive no fruit of spiritual grace in this ordinance.

So let him eat, so let him drink. The apostle* here obviates an error crept into the Romish church, the taking away the cup, a custom unknown in the purest and primitive times of Christianity. 'Let him eat and *drink*,' saith the apostle; 'Let him eat, but *not drink*,' saith the church of Rome. How soundly doth the Romish church accord with the primitive church! 'Drink ye all of this,' saith Christ, Matt. xxvi. 27; 'Let the people not touch the cup,' saith Rome. How valid with them is the authority of that Christ they profess to be the Son of God, and the supreme head of the church! The apostle, saith Estius, commands that none should partake without examination, but doth not command that every one should drink. I answer, either it is a command or a permission; it seems to be a command. As the apostle commands the self-trial, so he commands the end of that trial, which is drinking the cup as well as eating the bread. If he commands the trial, he commands much more the participation, because in enjoining the means, he enjoins the end. We are bound to the use of means only in order to the end of those means. If the apostle commands the eating the bread, he commands also the partaking of the cup, the word *so*, &c., being grammatically to be applied to both. It would be ridiculous to think that the apostle's language was in this strain: Let a man examine himself, and if he finds himself fit for this mystery, let him choose whether he will either eat or drink; he may do one or both if he will, or he may let it alone if he will. Who would dare to put such a sense upon the apostle's words? If *let* be a word of command in the former sentence, it is no less in the latter. If therefore, he commands examination as a means, he commands communion as the end; and communion much more, since the end is nobler than the means, and the means desirable for the sake of the end. But if it be a permission of the apostle, (for that it must be at least in the judgment of any man), that every one finding himself fit upon a trial, may drink of the cup as well as eat of the bread; what power on earth should deny that, which the inspired apostle and great doctor of the Gentiles permits? What pope or councils have authority to deprive any Christian of that which the founder of the Gentile church hath upon record allowed unto them? What reason can be alleged that it is not as proper for the church now, as it was for the church of the Corinthians? It was of use many centuries after the apostles' times, and is practised in all churches but that of Rome, wherein the denial of the cup was introduced about two hundred sixty odd years ago. What a blessing do we enjoy, to be freed from the antichristian yoke, and enjoy those privileges which the wickedness of men would deprive us of!

Bread and Cup. The doctrine of transubstantiation was not then known in the church.* The apostle calls it bread and cup three several times, vers. 26-28. Our reason, our sense, our sight, our taste, informs us it is bread and wine. The papists tell us, against reason and sense, that it is not bread, though it have the colour and taste of bread, but it is really the flesh and blood of Christ; it is changed and transmuted into his body and blood. It is indeed a sign of the body of Christ, a memorial of his broken, crucified body, and of his blood shed. The water in baptism represents the blood of Christ for the washing the soul, as the wine doth his blood for the nourishment and comforting the soul. Can any man say against his sense that it is not truly water? The church is called 'the body of Christ,' Eph.

* Daillé, *Melange des Sermons*, Serm. xviii. p. 287, &c.

† Daillé, *Melange des Sermons*, Serm. xxviii. p. 283, &c.

i. 22, 23. But have not those men and women that make up the church, distinct persons from the person of Christ, distinct substances from the body of Christ? Are they upon their union to Christ as his members changed into the nature of Christ, and corporally his members, as his hands, and feet, and fingers were his upon the earth, and are his now in heaven? Why should the apostle call it so often bread, if it were not bread, if the nature and substance of it were changed into another substance? The Scripture gives both the names of bread and wine, and the body and blood of Christ, to the elements. They cannot be both properly; it cannot be bread properly, and the body of Christ properly; one therefore must be figuratively understood. Our sense tells us, and the apostle informs us, that it is bread; therefore it is called the body of Christ by a figure, since it hath nothing of the qualities of the flesh, but the essential qualities of bread. Besides, had it been properly the body of Christ, the apostle had discoursed far below his intention, which was to correct the irreverence of the Corinthians in this ordinance, and to recommend to them the sober and venerable use of it. He had neglected the main argument to enforce his main design, had it been properly the body of Christ, which would have made their irreverence more unreasonable, and of the highest guilt imaginable. He had been imprudent to have neglected acquainting them that this was the substance of the body of Christ, his very flesh and blood, and had been unfaithful in his trust, and silent in the most considerable argument. This had been more for his present purpose; but there is not a syllable of any such thing.* The apostle might have argued in a higher manner from that, to convince them of the sinfulness of unworthy receiving; but he makes a manifest distinction between the bread and the cup, and between the body and blood of Christ: 'He that eats this bread and drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.' The bread and wine may be received unworthily, but the body and blood of Christ cannot be received unworthily. That implies a contradiction; for Christ assures us that 'every one that eats his flesh, and drinks his blood, hath eternal life,' John vi. 54. The papists say,† that because he that receives unworthily is guilty of the body and blood of Christ, therefore the body and blood of Christ is really in the sacrament. Saul's persecuting the disciples of Christ was, in the account of Christ, a persecuting of himself, Acts ix. 4. Was the body of Christ, glorified in heaven, really present in the bodies of his disciples persecuted by Saul? And when the apostle speaks (Heb. x. 29) of 'treading under foot the Son of God,' who is so foolish as to imagine that the Son of God was really in his person and body under the feet of those apostates, as the body of an enemy they had thrown down might be under their feet? The bread is called the body of Christ representatively and sacramentally. And it is an ingenious observation of a learned man,‡ that the word, 'This is my body,' refers to the supper in distinction from the passover, which Christ put an honourable end unto: Matt. xxvi. 26, 'As they were eating' (*i. e.*, as they were eating the paschal lamb), 'Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, Take eat, this is my body.' The paschal lamb was Christ's body in a figure, Exod. xii. 46. Speaking of the paschal lamb, 'Neither shall you break a bone thereof,' which is applied to Christ, who had not a bone of his body broken upon the cross, which John takes notice of as a 'fulfilling of the scripture,' John xix. 36. 'These

* Slichting in 1 Cor. xi. 27.

† Dailé, *Melange des Sermons*, Sermon xxviii. p. 297.

‡ Lightfoot, *Gleanings out of Exod.* sect. xviii.

things were done that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken;’ which can refer to no other but the command about the paschal lamb in that place of Exodus. To this it is that the word *σῶμα* doth refer in the speech of our Saviour: ‘*This is my body.*’ The passover had been a sacramental type of the body of Christ to the Jews. He was the Lamb of God, and he is ‘our passover sacrificed for us.’ But now Christ takes bread, and tells them, This is my body under the gospel. The paschal lamb shall no more be a representation of my body, as it hath been hitherto, but this shall be the sign of it. The bread upon this account is no more really the body of Christ than the paschal lamb was the body of Christ for so many ages, wherein it had represented it, which none of the Romanists will acknowledge to be transubstantiated into the body of Christ. They differed not in their representation, but only in the circumstance of time; one representing Christ to be slain, the other representing him crucified and slain already.

In ver. 29 the apostle describes the punishment, as he had (ver. 27) described the sin: ‘For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.’

He that eats and drinks unworthily. (1.) In an unworthy state. (2.) In an unworthy frame, not actually discerning the Lord’s body.

Eateth and drinketh damnation to himself. *Κεῖμα* signifies sometimes judgment, Gal. v. 10, 1 Pet. iv. 17. Unworthy receiving is such an act as deserves damnation, and if not repented of, will bring damnation. The state may be changed, and so damnation avoided; but believers themselves, for their unworthy frames, shall not avoid the stroke of God, which the next verse manifests, ver. 30: ‘For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.’

Not discerning the Lord’s body. Not discerning the end, subject, and mystery of this sacrament; putting no difference between that and common bread. There is putting a difference between things, in regard of opinion and judgment.* As God is said to put no difference between the Jews and Gentiles, in regard of purification by faith, Acts xv. 9: ‘And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith;’ so men put no difference between the body of Christ and the body of a mere man, between bread as representing the body of Christ, and bread, the ordinary staff of life, when they make no solemn preparation for it than they do for an ordinary repast. When a man doth not regard the person and merit of Christ according to the true value of him, and comes to the Lord’s table as to common bread,† and considers not to what end the elements are destined, nor the greatness and glory of that body which they represent, he violates in those signs the honour due to the majesty of Christ. If a man did rightly understand the dignity of the body of Christ, and how much it suffered for our sins, and that we should die to sin, he would certainly prepare himself by a strict survey of his own heart, that he might not come unworthily to so great a mystery.

In the verses we see,

1. The antecedent duty, examination.
2. The subsequent duty, participation.
1. The antecedent duty, which is laid down,
 - (1.) In the extent of the subject, *A man, i.e., every man.*
 - (2.) The nature of the duty, *Examine.*
 - (3.) The object of it, *Himself.*
 - (4.) The necessity of it, *So let him come, not else.*

* Daillé, *Melange des Sermons*, Sermon xxviii.

† Amyraut in loc.

2. The subsequent duty described in its two parts.

(1.) Eating the bread.

(2.) Drinking the cup.

3. The enforcement to this duty, ver. 29.

(1.) The danger of unworthiness, *Eats and drinks damnation.*

(2.) The nature of unworthiness, *Not discerning the Lord's body.*

(3.) To which we may add, The sinfulness of unworthiness: ver. 27, *He that eats and drinks unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.* To which the particle *but* (ver. 28) refers, as the means to avoid that sinfulness: 'But let a man examine himself.'

Doctrine:

1. All men outwardly professing Christianity are not in a capacity to come to the great ordinance of the supper. The apostle writes not to the heathen, but the Christian Corinthians.

2. It is every man's duty solemnly to examine himself about his interest in Christ, and his right to this ordinance, before he come.

3. Without due examination, and by unworthy receiving, a man commits a great sin, and incurs a great danger.

1. For the first. All men outwardly professing Christianity are not in a capacity to come to the great ordinance of the supper. If all men were capable, pre-examination were not then necessary. But because this duty is enjoined as a precedent, therefore those that cannot examine themselves, and those that find no good issue of that examination, ought not to come; for the word 'so' excludes all such. Christ preached to a multitude, he excluded none from hearing, no not the worst of the Pharisees. But this ordinance he administered in a select company; he preached openly, he celebrated this privately in an upper room, whence the custom of celebrating in the chancel or upper part of the church, not in the body of it, took its rise. The word is more extensive, this more contracted. There were multitudes in the Jewish church owned him as the Messiah; but not all were admitted by him at this his first institution, but the apostles, and perhaps some few other disciples. For though he said to 'sit down with the twelve,' Mat. xxvi. 20, yet (ver 26) he is said to 'give it his disciples.' If there were only apostles there, it signifies that he gave it to them, not as apostles, but as disciples, to shew thereby that all those that give up themselves sincerely to his instruction are capable of this ordinance in all ages of the church, and that it is not common to all that only make a mere profession of him. Anciently the catechumens, or persons entering their names to Christ to be instructed, stood a long time upon their probation before they were admitted into the more secret mysteries of the Christian religion, whether with good reason, I will not here determine; superstition lies principally in excess.

In prosecution of this doctrine, we shall lay down some propositions.

1. Only regenerate men are fit to come to the Lord's Supper. No man in a natural state but must needs eat and drink unworthily, for he retains his enmity and hostile disposition against God and Christ. Sanctified persons only are the proper guests. This was prefigured by the ceremony of washing the disciples' feet, which Christ used before the supper, John xiii. 8, 10. Without sanctification we have no part in Christ, and therefore no right to his supper. An unregenerate man cannot perform the duties necessary, drag out his sins, arraign them before God, mourn for his abominations, with a hearty contrition. By examination in the text, we must not understand a bare examination, but that which ought to be the consequent upon it, a judging ourselves, and performing those acts consonant to the state we judge

ourselves in. For so the apostle means, as appears by ver. 31, following the text, 'For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.' To what purpose is this commanded examination necessary, but for any man to see whether he hath those dispositions which are essential requisites to this ordinance? The children of Habaiiah, the children of Koz, and of Bazzilai, were not to eat of the most holy things, because they were not in the register of the genealogies, Ezra ii. 61-63. If our names be not written in heaven, and are not to be found in the genealogies of the new born, we are not fit to eat of this holy feast. Those that were uncircumcised in heart as well as in flesh, were not to enter into God's sanctuary, Ezek. xlv. 9. Though an unrenewed man may be a great moralist, and his moral virtues may look like some pieces of a wedding garment, yet they are not the wedding garment till they be wrought into a right fashion by faith. It is a feast, and therefore only for God's friends. It is bread belonging to children; unrenewed men are not yet in a state of sonship. Circumcision was to precede the passover, Exod. xii. 44; baptism to precede the supper. But this is but a symbol of an inward grace, without which no right to participation. The Israelites were baptized in the Red Sea, before they fed on spiritual manna, 1 Cor. x. 2, 3.

(1.) Faith is a necessary qualification, but unrenewed men have not faith. *Take, eat*, implies something spiritually to be done. There must be the hand of faith to receive and apply Christ, the mouth of faith to take in Christ. Natural men want both a spiritual hand and a spiritual mouth. An unbeliever receives the elements, not the life and spirit, of a sacrament. Faith is as much a condition requisite to a spiritual partaking of the sacrament, as to everlasting salvation. No salvation without believing, no taste of Christ without believing. Without faith, a man receives no more the body of Christ, than a chicken that should come into a room after, and pick up some fallen crumbs of bread from the ground, receives the body of Christ. The main qualification which makes sacramental bread spiritual food is wanting. We can no more turn the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ without faith, than a chemist can transmute one metal into another without the operation of fire. Christ dwells in the heart by faith only, Eph. iii. 17. The paschal lamb was not to be eaten till the posts of the house were sprinkled with the blood of it, Exod. xii. 7. The soul must be sprinkled with the blood of Christ by faith before it is fit to partake of this ordinance. As God doth not promise salvation absolutely to man, but upon condition of faith, so the sacrament doth not seal absolutely remission of sins to man, but upon the condition of believing. If there be no sealing therefore of the counterpart to God by performing the condition upon which God doth found his grants, there is no right to the seal. The promise is made to the penitent and believing sinner. What interest can he think to have in the seal, who hath not yet embraced the promise? It seals in particular to a person what the word proposeth in general upon such a condition. Pardon of sin is sealed to faith; there must be a performance of the condition on our part, before there can be any ratification by the seal to us. God seals no more than he promises, nor in any other manner than he promises. He promises only to faith, and therefore only seals to faith. Covenant graces therefore must be possessed and acted before covenant blessings can be ratified to us. As in covenants between man and man, the seal annexed to the writing seals no more than what is contained in the writing, and upon the acceptance and performance of such conditions, which

* Bolton of the Sacrament, pp. 87, 88.

are mentioned in the deed. Where there is not therefore an acceptance and performance of the conditions between the parties, the seal is no more than a blank, as to any real advantage. The sacrament is a seal *in actu primo*, in its own nature, but not *in actu secundo* to a wicked man; a faithless impenitent man hath not the beneficial fruit of it. It doth seal an unbeliever his damnation; for 'he that believes not shall be damned,' is part of the gospel, as well as 'he that believes shall be saved,' Mark xvi. 16. The question is not, whether the condition of faith may not be infused at the time of partaking by the extraordinary grace of God. The supper seems not to be a renewing, converting ordinance. That there must be faith, if there be any true fruit of it, is out of question, and that no unrenewed man hath, nor can have, any hopes he should be there inspired with so noble and necessary a grace; and therefore in that state he is not a capable subject of this ordinance. For such therefore to approach the Lord's table, is a mocking of God, to come to God to seal the remission of sin, when they have no mind to come up to the conditions wherewith that pardon is proposed; as it is for a man to come to a prince for pardon, who hath not yet laid down his arms against him. God in his seal testifies his approbation of the promises upon the conditions expressed; man in receiving testifies his approbation of the condition. He that hath no principle of approbation in him, mocks God in his approach. Faith is a necessary moral qualification to the receiving of the sacrament.

(2.) An unrenewed man is not in covenant, and therefore no capable subject. This follows upon the former. If he hath not faith, the condition of the covenant, he is not in covenant with God; and what right hath such an one to the seals? All men by nature are 'strangers to the covenant of promise, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel,' Eph. ii. 12. What have they to do with the privilege of the free denizens of Israel? They that are not included in the deed have nothing to do with the seals of the conveyance; it is but fruitless wax to them, not a confirming seal. The covenant runs thus, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his,' Cant. ii. 16; it is mutual between the parties. By covenanting with God, we become the Lord's: Ezek. xvi. 8, 'I entered into covenant with thee, saith the Lord, and thou becamest mine.' There is an appropriation of Christ to us, and a consecration of ourselves to Christ. What hath he to do with the ordinance, that wants the essentials of the covenant, who hath no valuation of Christ, no breathings after him, nor makes any dedication of himself to Christ? Those that never gave up themselves to God, receive no seal, but mere bread, mere wine. Unregenerate men are under a covenant of works. The covenant of works was made with the whole nature of man in Adam; the curse of the covenant seized upon all, Gal. iii. 10; the duties of that covenant are incumbent upon them who are under the curse of it; the violation of that covenant freed not man from his obligation to duty, though it brought upon him a new obligation to punishment. It is a privilege only of believers to be freed from the covenant of works; for they are 'not under the law, but under grace,' Rom. vi. 14. And 'there is no condemnation' only 'to them that are in Christ,' Rom. viii. 1. But where men do not believe, God deals with them upon the terms of the first covenant; he expects a full righteousness from them in their own persons, as being without Christ, and having not accepted of his blood upon his own terms, to take away the guilt of their sins. It is true, unregenerate men are under the offers of the covenant of grace, but not within actual acceptation of the covenant of grace. They enjoy some benefits of the covenant made with Christ; for they enjoy their lives, have worldly comforts, the fruits of God's

patience, all which are upon the account of the Mediator ; and they have been entered in by baptism ; yet since they practically disown the terms of that covenant, they put themselves back under a covenant of works, to stand upon their own bottom ; and therefore refusing a consent to that covenant, the benefits of the covenant belong not to them. For if a seal (as some affirm) be of the same nature with an oath, whereby God confirms his promise, yet it is so only to the heirs of promise, not to those that are rejecters of the covenant and promise.

(3.) This sacrament is a sacrament of nourishment. Unrenewed men therefore are not fit for it. They are dead, Eph. ii. 1 ; and what hath a dead man to do with a feast ? Men must be alive before they be nourished. It is *eat, drink*. The principal intent is not to eat corporeally, but spiritually ; words not to be spoken to a dead man. Meat and drink may be put into a dead man's mouth, but he can swallow down neither one nor another in a vital way, nor concoct either of them. He that wants the life of grace can make no use of the nourishment of grace ; so that the sacrament is at best but a vain thing to such. But besides, the very end of the sacrament is perverted, when the richest viands are taken by a man spiritually dead ; as the end of bread, which is to nourish the body, is perverted, and the creature abused by being used contrary to the end of it, when it is put into the mouth of a dead man, to whom it can be no advantage. The body of Christ conveys strength and growth to his own members only ; to living members, not to dead. Dead branches receive no sap from the vine.

(4.) This sacrament is an ordinance of inward communion with Christ. But unrenewed men can have no inward communion with him. They cannot have that joy which ought to be in a converse with Christ, because they cannot taste any of those spiritual dainties which are in this feast. They may eat the sacramental bread, but regenerate men only have a new relish, spiritually, to taste the body and blood of Christ ; they only relish the milk of the word, and the sweetness of a sacrament. What communion can Belial have with Christ, or darkness with light ? Christ will have no converse with his enemies, till they are prepared for his reception by the stamp of his Spirit. Christ must be let into the heart before he sups with it : Rev. iii. 20, ' If any man open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him.' The door must be opened by conversion, before Christ will feast with the soul in a spiritual communion. Those that are not graciously fit for a spiritual communion with him in heaven, are not fit for a spiritual communion with him in the earth : ' Unless we be born again, we cannot enter into the kingdom of God,' John iii. 5, and therefore have no right to those privileges which are the foretastes of glory. Bosom-communion belongs only to bosom friends ; others are but intruders, and will receive no countenance from Christ.

(5.) This ordinance is to be received by true Christians only. But renewed men only are such. Christianity is an inward powerful work, not a paint, an image. The *form* of godliness doth not constitute a man a Christian, but the *power* of it, 2 Tim. iii. 5. All natural men are ' without God in the world ;' they are *ἄθεοι*, Eph. ii. 12, atheists, and may as well be called *ἄχριστοί*, not Christians, being ' without Christ.' There is not only required an assent of the understanding to make a man a Christian *in foro Dei*, but a consent of the will ; there must be the accepting as well as the assenting part. It is not a bare knowledge, or the profession of religion, demonstrates a man a regenerate man, either in the presence of God, or to himself, though to others in the judgment of charity it doth. It is a work of the will that is required ; he is no Christian who barely knows Christ to be king, priest,

and prophet, and cordially accepts him in none of those offices. Now this ordinance being the proper badge and privilege of Christians, none ought to partake of it but Christians. These evidences belong to the proper tenant, not to the counterfeit; to those that are his real friends, not to his lip friends and heart enemies. Freemen only have a right to the privileges of the city, and true Christians to the privileges of the church.

Obj. But it may be said, By this, none but those that have assurance of their being in a state of grace ought to come to this institution; and certainly there is many a true Christian wants this comfort; and the supper is a privilege due to grace, not to assurance; to Christians as Christians, not to Christians as comfortable Christians.

Ans. I answer, Caution is to be used in this, lest some doubting Christian should be left in a maze. Many humble souls are most backward; the presumptuous spur on apace; the baser metals are most volatile.

(1.) Penitent persons mourning for sin, though wanting assurance, are regenerate, and have a right. Contrite hearts are the most acceptable sacrifices to God, next to the bruised body of our Saviour, Ps. li. 17. Those that have bruised hearts, and cannot call to mind their former sins, but the pulse of their indignation beats quick against them, to such Christ appears first. He shewed himself to Mary Magdalene before he appeared to any of the apostles after his resurrection, yea, before he appeared to his own mother, Mark xvi. 9; and possibly some of her former sorrow began to spring afresh, as her speech seems to discover some sorrow and astonishment in her, and a great affection to Christ, John xx. 11, 13, 15. Such bleeding, contrite souls doth Christ love; and such as he loves shall be as John, lying in his bosom, and leaning upon him at a sacrament. Where there is a true repentance, a detestation of all sin, a resolution to avoid sin for the future, and a lying at the feet of Christ, there is true grace, though it may not be always visible to the soul. These are the sour herbs we are to eat the passover withal.

(2.) Regenerate persons cannot always say positively that they have grace, yet find so much ground as that they cannot absolutely deny it, unless in some sharp fit of desertion. It is not easily discerned sometimes, because of the weakness of it. Faith, like a grain of mustard seed, may lie sometimes in a heap of rubbish; clouds of sin, withdrawals of the Spirit, and injudiciousness of conscience, may obscure the work upon the heart at some seasons; yet a strong will, and an earnest breathing to please Christ, whispers something in the soul to cherish it. A strong and prevailing will is the proper evidence of conversion, and in Scripture it is expressed by will: Rev. xxii. 17, 'Let him that is athirst come, and he that will, let him come.' The acts of the will and the thirst of the soul are easily discernible, enough to keep the heart from a denial of the work of grace, though not enough to clear it up against all oppositions. The work of grace may be clouded; the sun does not always send forth its beams. The thorn in Paul's flesh seems to be a present cloud upon his spirit, hindering him from a sight of his own evidences, since it is put in opposition to the revelations he had in his rapture into the third heavens, 2 Cor. xii. Mary knew her own affection to Christ, and her sorrow for her sin, and could not deny those affections so palpable in herself and visible to others; but had not assurance of her state till Christ spake that comfortable word to her, Luke vii. 38, 48, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.' Every man that is regenerate may be able, upon a perusal of his own heart, to say, I am sincere in this or that; my ends are right, and the bent of my heart stands towards God. In grace there is some light discovering of it, though not perfectly, yet so as the soul can say, I am no hypocrite.

(3.) A perfect assurance is not required. It is said, 'Let a man examine himself' as to the frame and temper of his heart; not let him be assured of his being in Christ and of an happy state, but let him take a survey of his heart, and see that his frames are suitable, and so let him come. The supper supposeth men not to have a full assurance; it is a seal, and seals are for confirmation, where there may be matter of doubt. It is a question, whether a perfect assurance be in the world. As grace is not perfect, but hath its ebbs and floods, so hath assurance. As faith is mixed with unbelief, so is assurance with doubtings. As the soul saith, 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief,' so it hath often said, Lord, I hope; help my doubts. The needle stands right to the North Pole, but not without its tremblings. In the greatest doubtings, we should have recourse to those sparklings and sprightly leaps of our souls, when we found the first touches upon our hearts, and stay ourselves upon those presents we had in the day of our espousals.

2. Ignorant persons are not in a capacity for the supper. The subjects capable of it are men and women professing Christianity, and understanding the grounds of that which they profess. Light in the mind, and the true knowledge of God, was part of the image of God, and our original righteousness in the creation, as well as rectitude in the will, and the right standing of it towards God, Col. iii. 10. Ignorance being a privation of that ornament of the soul, a fruit of our apostasy, the root of all our dishonouring of God, cannot render us fit guests for his table, or procure a welcome from him. Blind offerings can be no more acceptable to God under the gospel than they were under the law. He is a great king, Mal. i. 14. Those that approach to him are bound to know what belongs to the honour of his name.

By this ignorance we are not to understand,

(1.) An ignorance of the abstruse controversies in religion, which are often too knotty for the sharpest and most industrious understanding to unloose. A man may be unable to understand thorny and intricate disputes, yet with a sanctified knowledge of the fundamentals of religion, be in a nearer capacity for the benefits of this ordinance, than those that by their subtle wits can divide a hair.

(2.) Nor a scholastical knowledge of fundamentals, so as to be able to give an exact definition of those things which are necessary to be known. It is sufficient if he knows them as a Christian, though not as a scholar. A house may be strong, and keep out wind and weather for the security of the inhabitant, though it be not so neatly built and skilfully garnished. A man may know the fundamental articles, yet not know all the consequences rationally deducible from those articles.

(3.) Nor a perfect knowledge of all the ends of the death and resurrection of Christ. To know that Christ died, what he was, and for what he died, is necessary, but a perfect knowledge none have. As graces have their spots, so our knowledge hath its mixtures of darkness. The wisdom which the wise angels are daily learning, cannot be grasped by the largest and most elevated understanding upon the earth. The disciples in the time of Christ's being in the flesh, had but little knowledge of his death and resurrection, Luke ix. 44, 45, John xx. 9. Peter understood him to be the Son of God, but was ignorant of God's design to redeem the world by his blood, Mat. xvi. 16, xxii. 23. They afterwards knew something of it, and had an habit and disposition to believe whatsoever Christ should reveal to them. Yet that knowledge which was sufficient for the apostles, till a fuller manifestation by the Spirit, is no plea for our ignorance in the same thing, since the pouring forth of the Spirit, the taking off Moses his veil, and penning the truths of the gospel with a sunbeam. A little knowledge at the time of

Christ's being in the world, and in several ages of the world, where the means have been less, would be more acceptable than a greater knowledge now, disproportioned to the means of knowing.

(4.) There must be an understanding and believing in some measure the fundamentals of religion. We must have some understanding of the nature and attributes of God, especially those that are more bright in the sufferings of Christ, and they are to be particularly respected in all our acts of worship : as the holiness and justice of God, the power and faithfulness of God, the omniscience and omnipresence of God, the sovereignty and goodness of God. We must know the fall of Adam, the fruits of it upon his posterity, the exactness and spirituality of the law ; there can be no motion to God without a sense of our misery. We must know Christ in his nature, God-man ; in his design, redemption ; in his commission, sent ; in the manner of effecting it, by the shedding his blood, resurrection from the dead ; the manner of applying it, by his intercession in heaven, and his Spirit on earth ; in his offices, as king, priest, and prophet ; the efficacy, value, and merit of his sufferings, the purifying virtue of his blood, the necessity of salvation by him, that there is no justification but by his righteousness, no sanctification but by his Spirit, and that one is as necessary as the other ; the one for our acceptance with God, the other for our communion with God : the necessity and nature of faith for the enjoyments of the benefits purchased. There must be some knowledge in all those things, else we know not to whom, or how, or for what to apply ourselves in this great mystery of Christianity, which exhibits and represents to us on God's part the whole scheme of redemption, and requires on our parts the exercise of faith about its proper and particular object. There must be some knowledge of those things ; the quantity cannot be determined ; the quality is, that it be a sensible knowledge ; not such a knowledge as a parrot hath, that may be taught to rehearse the creed, without reason or sense to understand or believe a word he speaks. A modest and a sensible ignorance, provided it be not total, is more tolerable than a puffed and insensible knowledge.

(5.) A knowledge of the nature and ends of the ordinance. The Lord's body cannot otherwise be discerned, ver. 29. The mysteries of the ordinance would be as Arabic letters to him that understands not the meaning of them. The master of the family was to teach the use and ends of the pass-over to the receiver, and all that were present were to understand the ground of the first institution, and the nature of the ordinance. The supper being a contract between God and man, a man must understand the nature and terms of that covenant, and also the nature and end of the seal ; he cannot else be a worthy contractor with God. The body of the Lord cannot be discerned without an understanding of the nature of the ordinance, and the nature of the ordinance cannot be understood without a knowledge of those principles of religion upon which it is built.

Ignorant persons are not fit to come.

(1.) They are incapable of performing the duties requisite. The antecedent duty of self-examination enjoined by the apostle as essentially necessary, ' So let him eat,' not otherwise. Those therefore that are unskilful in this work, by reason of their ignorance of the universal depravation of nature, the obnoxiousness of all men to the curse of the law, and the impossibility of avoiding the terrors of it without an interest in that mediator, in and by the way of his own appointment, are incapable of performing this duty, and so unfit subjects for this ordinance. They cannot repent, for they have no spiritual eye to discover their own filthiness. The prodigal never ' came to himself ' till his understanding was enlightened, Luke xv. 17. By

the same ground that infants and children are excluded (who were anciently admitted to this ordinance), because of their defect of reason, not being able to perform this duty, ignorant persons are to be excluded. In them there is a natural, in ignorant persons a moral, inability, and under means of grace a sinful indisposition. There is as much reason for children in age to partake of this ordinance as for children in understanding. Both have a want of knowledge in those things which are of a concern to a right participation of this ordinance; nor can they perform the concomitant duties. Those who understand not the nature and ends of the death of Christ, cannot commemorate it in a right manner. All our service of God ought to be a reasonable service; not only as having the highest reason for a motive to urge it, but in regard of the *modus*, the manner of doing it. It must be done with an exercise of reason. We must serve God as Christians; but in our service we must not put off the nature of man. The right manner of partaking of this supper consists in repentance of sin, and faith in Christ; what repentance can there be for sin, when the evil of sin and the deplorable consequents of it are not known? What faith can there be in one ignorant of the cause and ends of the death of Christ? They cannot come with desires suitable, that know nothing of their own wants. They who know not themselves empty, cannot desire spiritual fulness; who know not themselves sick, cannot desire spiritual cordials; who know not themselves under the curse of the law, cannot desire a satisfying Christ; they have no sense of that for which his body was bruised, wounded, and crucified. Nor can they perform the subsequent duties, which are a walking in holiness; there is no foundation in blindness for any regular walk.

(2.) All ignorant persons are unbelievers. None formerly entered into covenant by a solemn profession * but those that had knowledge: Nehem. x. 28, 29, 'Every one having knowledge and having understanding entered into an oath to walk in God's law.' How can any believe the glorious things of the gospel, which they know not, nor desire to know, but stop their ears, blind their eyes like bats and owls, love the darkness of the night better than a clear sunshiny day? If we know not the firmness of the ground, we will never set our foot upon it. A man in ignorance is in the 'chains of darkness.' 'Darkness' and the 'power of the devil' are the same thing, Acts xxvi. 18. He that hath ignorance in his head and heart is alienated from God. An alienation from God is a friendship with the devil. Is it fit for the voluntary captives of Christ's greatest enemy to come rattling with their chains of darkness, and under the conduct and power of the devil, to a feast appointed for the friends of God?

(3.) Such know not how to value this ordinance aright. It is not fit a jewel should be bestowed on him who understands not the value of it, and would part with it for a song to the next cheat he meets. An ignorant person would part with any spiritual excellency upon the next temptation of the devil. As want of strength makes the body, so want of knowledge makes the minds of children capable of being moulded into any form. An eye unpurged from the films upon it can never discover the beauties of divine mysteries, or entertain them with any spiritual delight. He that understands not his original corruption knows not how to prize a medicine. You may sooner make one born blind admire the sun, which he never saw, than make a blind soul have an estimation of Christ, to whom he hath a natural enmity.

(4.) Ignorant persons are always under the command of some secret lust. Ignorance itself is a great sin. The not knowing what we may easily know, since it is revealed, is so far from excusing that it rather aggravates; be-

* Ignorantis non est consensus.

cause it is not a defect in the faculty itself (as in the case of madmen), but a defect in the improvement of the faculty, and such a defect as is voluntary, which man hath a power to remove. It stifles the notion of God rather than is dispelled by it: John i. 5, 'The darkness comprehendeth it not,' *i. e.* the light. Besides the evil of its own nature, it is the ground of all wickedness. If they are only 'filled with goodness' that are filled with knowledge, Rom. xv. 14, they must be filled with evil that are filled with ignorance. Where the mind is dark, the motion must needs be irregular. The ignorance contracted by the fall hath been the root of all the corrupt inclinations and mis-carriages in Adam's posterity. Ignorance first brought lust into fashion, and keeps up the mode: 1 Peter i. 14, 'Not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance.' A fashion, course, and form of sin renders men unfit guests for the Lord's table.

And this leads to the third proposition.

3. Proposition. Men guilty of a course of sin, though secret and unknown to others, are unfit for this ordinance. This injunction, 'Let a man examine himself, and so let him come,' bars out such. By examination is not to be meant a bare act of examination, but that which ought to be consequent upon it; not let a man examine himself, and in whatsoever posture he finds his soul let him come; no, let him examine himself to find out the nest of vipers in his soul which hiss against Christ, and cast them out. Let him perform the acts consonant to that state wherein, upon inquiry, he finds himself. What man would be so wretched as to make this conclusion: I am a swine, a beast, I live in such and such sins unrepented of, yet I have performed my duty, I have examined myself, which is all the apostle requires of me, and I rest in this act; nothing more is enjoined me. Is there no end of this act? All things are commanded, not for themselves, but for some end. The apostle enjoins it not to make the sacrament a license for sin, or to encourage the wearing of Christ's livery to keep men's lusts warm. Every secret gross sinner stands anathematised both by law and gospel; the law curseth him because of his sin, and the gospel condemns him because of his unbelief. What excludes a man from admission when it is known to others, excommunicates him in his own conscience when it is only known to himself. All things in the ordinance bespeak purity; the place was fitted for the first institution, the soul must be fitted for the participation; the place was trimmed for Christ's entertainment, the heart must be trimmed for his reception. The grave of Christ was free from corruption; no putrefied body was ever lodged there; the soul must be free from any affection to filth. Though Christ had not a hole where to lay his head, he will not have a sty or a swine-trough wherein to lay his body. His humanity is advanced above the highest heavens, and the signs of it are not to be received by an earthly and polluted soul. Such ought not to approach, though they seem to have a repentance, till it appears that their repentance is serious and thorough. Those that have been stained with some secret gross crime ought not to approach upon a sudden and late begun contrition.* To mourn one day and come to this ordinance the next, argues but little care to dispose themselves for so great an institution. A soul glutted with sin, though beginning to vomit it up, cannot so suddenly gain a spiritual taste for the body of Christ. How many have had sudden qualms, and discharged themselves of some sins the better to swallow more! Imaginations of repentance are not always realities. He that offends another, and saith he is sorry for it, and a short time after offends again, affords no reason to believe that he is a penitent in earnest.

* Cajetan. Sum., p. 59.

Quest. What sins debar a man from this ordinance ?

(1.) Not such which are infirmities incident to human nature. Every sin doth not impede the operation of faith about the proper object. Every breach of the command is not a hindrance. Sins of daily infirmities are breaches of the command, otherwise they are not sins. There is no perfection of virtue, while remission of sins is to be daily petitioned for ; the state of perfection is reserved for a state of glory. There is a blackness mixed with the church's comeliness, Cant. i. 5, a blackness of sin as well as of affliction. The wheat ceaseth not to be wheat, though tares are mixed with it. In the best mines there are earth and dross as well as gold ; precious stones have their flaws, which cannot be removed without the destruction of the substance, nor infirmities abolished without the destruction of the body. The disciples were not without corruptions at the institution ; ambition bubbled up in them, Luke xxii. 24, and fear quickly made them forsake their Master ; but they were not naturalised or rooted in this evil, neither did the devil enter into them as he did into Judas. As the Father of mercies doth not disovenant us for every infirmity, so neither should we exclude ourselves from partaking of the seal : 1 John ii. 1, ' If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.' The office of advocacy erected in heaven supposeth sin after regeneration, and during our continuance in the world. But there is a great difference between the indwelling of sin and the rule of sin. To sin is to decline from that rectitude in an act which the agent ought to observe. In this respect we sin, according to the tenor of the law, in everything we do, though not according to the tenor of the gospel.

(2.) But a course in wilful and frequent breaches of a known command debars a man. That which is against the principal intent of the command, and the main office it requires of us, such as omissions of known duties. When family duties are omitted, and the house, which should be as a little church, is rather a synagogue of Satan ; when there is a total or frequent omission of secret prayer, which disowns that worship of God which is due to him by the light of nature, and is the note of a wicked man. ' Will he always call upon God ?' Job xxvii. 10. Those that forget Christ all the week are not likely to be devout in the remembrance of him upon a Sabbath. And such sins of commission as are enumerated, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, ' fornicators, adulterers, effeminate, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners,' are a bar if not repented of, 2 Cor. xii. 21. The heart that is an habitation of any of those kinds of devils is not a member of Christ, and can bring nothing but a mystery of iniquity to fit it to partake of the mysteries of Christ. This is a blaspheming Christ in the heart, while he is received with the hands ; like the reviling thief that hung beside him on the cross, not like a loving or beloved disciple that looks upon him by faith while he is bleeding to death. These have no right till their guilt be unbound by repentance and faith.

Such ought not to meddle with this ordinance.

[1.] Moral uncleanness is a greater bar than ceremonial. If a man were defiled with a dead carcase, he was to forbear eating the passover, Num. ix. 6. If any man, unclean by the touch of a dead body, came into the tabernacle, he defiled it, and was threatened with a cutting off from Israel, Num. xix. 13. How much more ought they to abstain from the table of the Lord, that are not only defiled, but dead, who bear a dead putrefied soul in a living body ? 1 Tim. v. 6, ' She that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.' If ceremonial uncleanness, without any mixture of a moral, were hateful to God, much more hateful to him is moral uncleanness. The worship of God is more precious than to be sacrilegiously invaded by impenitent

sinners; every work of the hands, and that which is offered is unclean, as well as when offered by one that had touched the dead, Hag. ii. 13, 14. Lepers who had a natural disease were not to come into the congregation, that they might not defile the place wherein the Lord dwelt, Lev. xiii. 46, Num. v. 2, much less ought they to approach this ordinance, where the Lord is solemnly present as master of the feast, who have running sores, and stink above ground in the nostrils of God. If for those outward uncleannesses men were to abstain from those institutions which the apostle calls 'worldly rudiments' and 'carnal ordinances,' they are too foul guests for so rich a feast, who can bring nothing else but the loathsome exhalations of hell to spiritual ordinances. The livery of the devil becomes not the table of the Lord.

[2.] All the right which they may claim by baptism is forfeited *in foro Dei*. It is a repentance, profession of faith, resolution to walk accordingly, and the answer of a good conscience towards God, which are the foundations of any man's right to the supper; but secret impieties are a disowning repentance, violating good resolutions, denying the faith which hath been before professed. Where the terms of the covenant are not observed, there is a forfeiture of any right to the benefits and seals of it. All rebellion is of right followed with an attainder and deprivation of birthright. A continual breach of covenant by commission of known sin attains the soul in the court of heaven, and the charter is not to be enjoyed but by the parties that fulfil the conditions required. He that 'hates instruction' hath no part in the covenant, Ps. l. 16, 17. What claim can he be supposed to have, that declares to God by his practice that he will not be ruled by his law, or own him as his chiefest good? A rebel separated from Christ in affection and will hath nothing to do with an ordinance of peace. He that takes no care of the honour of God who created him, nor of his own soul, which is to run parallel with the endless line of eternity, is a much worse infidel than he that neglects provision for his own family; yet of such an one the apostle pronounceth that he hath 'denied the faith,' 1 Tim. v. 8. Dogs they are in the account of God, more deservedly than the believing Canaanite was in the account of Christ. And wicked men are called so in Scripture, Rev. xxii. 15, 2 Peter ii. 22. What right have dogs to the children's bread, to the legacy of choicest love? Can such be supposed to be included in his will? If they have any right, it is to the table of devils, not to that of the Lord. And it may well be wondered how any men can come securely to a communion with Christ, who bring such evil dispositions and full-blown sins unrepented of, which they know will for ever deprive them of any communion with God in heaven, unless they think that great sins should merit glory!

[3.] Such cannot in that state perform the duties requisite in this ordinance. Faith is a necessary qualification; but a denial of subjection to Christ is an evidence of a gross infidelity. Practices are the clearest indexes of faith or unbelief; evil works deny God in his promises and precepts. If any man tells you he believes that to be fire which is before him, and that it will burn, and yet wilfully runs into it, you must either conclude he hath no assent to what he doth affirm, or else that he is mad, and hath a mind to destroy himself. And those that believe neither the promise nor command of the word, will not be induced to believe it because of the seal, when they give no credit to the writing. Repentance is necessary to this ordinance, but this and a course of sin are utterly inconsistent: repentance is a 'breaking off iniquity by righteousness,' Dan. iv. 27, and a secret sinner breaketh off righteousness by iniquity. An unwearied practice manifests a fixed resolution, but repentance is a change of the purpose of the heart, not to

commit the same iniquity again, nor any other : Job xxxiv. 32, ' If I have done iniquity, I will do no more.' A purpose of sin cannot consist with repentance, nor is a flashy purpose of repenting a true remorse. A bird may soar high towards heaven, and presently descend as low as earth ; as Saul resolved not to persecute David, but was quickly bent upon his old game. He cannot have a sense of sin, which is a necessary qualification to a worthy receiving : he understands not, believes not the vast breach sin hath made between God and the world, who every day is resolved to make it wider. He is not in the least truly affected with the greatness of that God against whom he sins, with the kindness of that Christ whom he freshly murders, the curse of the law which he hath incurred, nor the wrath of God which he hath provoked. Where any one sin is loved, that soul hath not a sense of the justice of God against it, or the unexpressible sufferings of Christ for it ; and can such a man have a fundamental right, who hath not a grain of the fundamental graces, or celebrate in a right manner the memorial of Christ, who walks every day as if the devil were his redeemer ?

[4.] Such contemptuously undervalue the blood of Christ, and therefore are unfit for this heavenly ordinance. It is no better than a mocking of God to come to his table with a professed enmity in the heart against him ; a Judas's *Hail, Master*, while he is playing the traitor ; the soldiers' *Hail, King of the Jews*, to Christ, while they design to crucify him. This is to be his executioner, not his guest. To hold in the heart any one sin, which is the enemy of Christ, while we partake of the supper, is no other than to design the murder of him ; as he that invites a prince to his house, wherein he lodges a desperate enemy to the prince he invites, may well be supposed to have a design against his life. We may as well profess our love openly to the nails that pierced him, and the spear that ran into his side, and adore them in our thoughts for such an action, as bring a love and zeal for those sins which were more bitter to him than the nails in his hands, or the reproaches of the rabble. A remorselessness in sin is a killing the Son of God afresh. What is it to be guilty of the blood of a man, such a man's blood as Job would not set with the dogs of his flock, or the blood of a Lazarus, who would be happier by a mortal stroke than a painful and beggarly life ? What is it then to have the guilt of the blood of the glorified Son of God, the blood of him that came to be our Saviour ; and thereby to do more than approve of the cursed action of the Jews ? Is it not as great an affront, as if one fallen into a jakes should, in that filthy condition, intrude himself into a prince's company, sit down at his table, and dip his bemired hands in the same dish ? He that knows himself to be a secret enemy to God, undervalues Christ by an approach to this ordinance, as if the body and blood of the Redeemer were food fit for a viper, or a swine good enough to wear his badge. Such is every man that hath a rooted affection to any one sin under a profession of Christ ; he puts a disgrace upon him, while he prefers his sin before him.

[5.] Such cannot receive any good from this ordinance. He can design no good to himself with a resolution to continue in his sin. What can his end be, but to see Christ bowing under sin, that himself may live more contentedly in it ? To attend upon any means of grace, that sin may abound, and be more at ease, is equivalent to continue in sin, that grace may abound, which the apostle mentions with *God forbid*, Rom. vi. 1, 2. Whosoever lies impenitent in any gross sin is dead, and can receive no more nourishment from any spiritual ordinance, than a dead man can by meat put into his mouth. His sin petitions against him, as Esther against Haman

at the banquet of wine,* and his death, as his sin, is more increased. He makes his sin more bulky by the addition of that of unworthy receiving, and hastens his death by a fresh provocation. It is as impossible such a man can obtain any beneficial end of the institution, as it was for a Jew to be purified, who held in his hand an unclean thing which defiled him, while he dipped himself in the purifying water; and he gets just as much good by the supper, as Judas by the sop, a part of the paschal sacrament, Job xiii. 17; to have not only one devil enter into him, but seven more, and return more proud, covetous, unclean, unbelieving, impenitent than before, with his sins more strengthened, as a believer's graces are, and more contented to lie in the mire, and increase sins to lay upon the cross of Christ. Judas did no more than this. I suppose he came only with a resolution to maintain that peculiar beloved sin of his, his covetousness, not dreaming of the consequent of it, the death of his Master, nor with any intent to procure it; for he was sorry when he heard Christ was condemned, and therefore in all likelihood aimed, not at the loss of his Master's life, but the filling his own purse; yet the devil took possession of him. A resolution to continue in any sin after the fit of devotion is over, settles Satan's throne faster in the heart. A wicked man's sacrifice is always 'an abomination to the Lord, much more when it is offered with a wicked mind,' Prov. xxi. 27. And what more wicked mind can there be than to resolve to preserve the enemy of a bleeding Christ found, while he is exhibited as broken and bleeding for it?

[6.] Such as lie in the mire of any secret sin are not fit for this ordinance, because it is not a converting ordinance, neither in the intention of God nor the ordination of Christ in the first institution. None but visible professors were counted capable of it in the primitive times; they first continued 'in the apostles' doctrine,' and then 'in breaking bread,' Acts ii. 42.

I will grant first,

(1.) That it may be the instrument of a second or partial conversion. There is a conversion from a natural state to a state of grace, which is the renewing of the mind; this is ordinarily wrought by the word, as the cord whereby God draws men; and a gradual conversion after some fall, as Peter was converted by a look of Christ: Luke xxii. 32, 'When thou art converted.' This latter may be caused by this ordinance, and that grace which hath been suppressed by sin receive the virtue of a resurrection by the sacrament. The representation of a broken Christ reminds a man of his sin committed against so dear and loving a Saviour. The remembrance of Christ in that ordinance, being the great wheel to set all the other wheels in motion, causes an actual conversion by exciting the grace which was habitually there before; and this may be called a conversion, as conversion is an exerting those principles of grace infused by the Spirit, and habitually resident in the heart, though under some languor by the prevalency of some sin.

(2.) I do not question God's absolute power. Not what God may do, but what he hath revealed to be his ordinary instrument, whereby he will work this or that effect. Who can limit the Holy One of Israel? His ways are unsearchable, and his paths past finding out. He hath an almighty power to create millions of worlds, it doth not follow therefore that he will do it. God by his absolute power may infuse the first grace into the heart at this ordinance; but God hath not discovered any such intention, or declared in his word, or in the nature of the institution, that this is the end of it.

(3.) I do not deny but that it is possible, that a man that hath some dispositions and previous preparations to grace, may have the first renewing

* Trap on Cant. vii. 7.

grace bestowed upon him at the supper.* For an unregenerate man may by a serious precedent examination rake into his own heart and life, search into his state how matters stand between God and his own soul, whereupon follow some convictions, contrition, and disaffection to his darling lust, and some resolutions against it; and God may come in with converting grace at the sacrament, and make an utter divorce between the soul and the sin, and the new name may be given together with the manna, and grace infused at that instant. Where there are such dispositions to the receiving a new form, why may it not be introduced at that time as well as another? Yet if any such effect be, I should rather ascribe it to the word attending the signs, than to the signs themselves, or the act of receiving; the beginning of grace being the proper end of the word, and not of the supper.

(4.) I will not deny but that it is possible that a man, seeing the passion of Christ represented in the supper, may have such an impression made upon his heart, and his affections united to Christ. The exhortations may be instrumental to the converting a spectator of the action and a hearer of the word. The sight of miracles hath been instrumental to the conversion of some (though I do not remember any particular instance of any man's conversion by the sight of a miracle without the word preached before, and then miracles added for confirmation of the word). The sight of things makes a deep impression upon us. The whole creation is a book of God's printing, and presents us with instructions worthy our notice, and generative of reflections in us. God doth teach by the eye as well as by the ear, and sacraments are called *verbum visibile*. This may be; but there is no example of any such conversion in Scripture, nor doth the end, manner, and nature of the institution credit the opinion of its being a converting ordinance, nor hath Christ discovered his will that it should be so. If any man hath been converted by it, I should rather attribute that effect to the word, the proper instrument of it. We say *sol et homo generant hominem*, yet we do not call the sun but the man the father of the child. Suppose a man had been converted by the supper by the good pleasure of God, must men unfit for it plead a right to it? Because one walking in the way hath found a treasure, must every one expect the like hap by walking in the same path? I have heard of some, and knew one, who dated his first spiritual awakening from a dream, but would not he dream that should look upon that as an institution of God to that purpose? Because one hath been cured of an ague by running into water as cold as ice, must therefore all under the same distemper follow the same course, where they may as well expect their death as their cure? No man can reasonably expect his conversion by coming in such a posture, whereby, contracting more than an ordinary guilt of the body and blood of Christ, he incurs a greater damnation.

But it is not likely to be a converting ordinance, because,

(1.) If baptism be not a converting ordinance, much less is this of the supper. That supposeth faith in the adult person, and the profession of faith in the parent for the child. The Jews did not admit a proselyte to circumcision before he was instructed in the law; then upon his own profession he was admitted to the seal, and his children upon the profession of the parent; and the apostle admitted no adult persons to baptism but upon their profession of Christianity. Circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of faith, Rom. iv. 11; it was a 'seal of the righteousness of faith which he had, being yet uncircumcised.' The circumcision at the first institution supposed faith in the party. Baptism hath the same relation, much more the supper; a seal supposeth something to be sealed. If it be appointed

* This is Suarez his opinion.

for ratifying the covenant and promises of it to the receiving soul, it supposeth that condition in the receiver which the covenant requires, otherwise it seals nothing. Anciently they did admit the baptized person immediately to the supper, though they kept them long in instruction before they administered the former.

(2.) This sacrament is appointed for nourishment, and that supposeth life. A sacrament doth not suppose the effect which it was instituted to produce, but this sacrament supposeth grace in a participant.* And indeed, bread and wine are not ordered to enliven a dead man, but to nourish and maintain life in a living man. The bellows kindle not the wood, but suppose fire kindled before. This sacrament is instituted as a part of refreshment, with meat and drink; and though Christ, who is exhibited in this sacrament, can raise a dead man, yet he is offered in this ordinance for producing such effects which are agreeable to the nature of it. He is offered as spiritual food, and spiritual food supposeth a new birth.

(3.) Pre-examination implies it to be no converting ordinance. If it were so, what need this bar, 'So let him come,' and not otherwise? What need such a strict examination, whether they did repent or whether they were regenerate? He must examine himself whether he be a sincere professor of Christianity, whether he have true repentance and faith, whether Christ be in him. That which is pre-required to the Lord's supper it was not properly instituted to effect.

(4.) The nature of excommunication speaks as much. Had it been a converting ordinance, should not the incestuous person rather have been kept in the Corinthian church for his amendment and reformation than thrown out? 1 Cor. v. 13, 'Put away from among you,' &c. It being intended as a medicine to reduce him to repentance and humiliation, did not deprive him of that which was the chief remedy to bring him to repentance. Though it be a cutting off from communion with the church and church privileges, yet not from hearing the word, which is not properly a church privilege, but the privilege of all where the gospel comes. An excommunicate person is to be held in the same rank as a heathen or publican, Mat. xviii. 17. Who would deny Turks and Pagans access to hearing the word if they would come, or not rather invite them to it and gladly receive them? Converting ordinances may be dispensed to known impenitent sinners. Christ preached the word to the pharisees, his stout-hearted enemies, who, he knew, conspired against his life. But he instituted and administered the supper only among his disciples.

(5.) The word was appointed to work faith. Rom. x. 17, 'Faith comes by hearing'; but where is it said, Faith comes by receiving the sacrament? There is plain proof for the one, none for the other. Paul was sent by preaching to open men's eyes, Acts xxvi. 18. We find many converted by the word, none by the sacraments: the jailor by the word, Lydia by the word, the eunuch by the word, three thousand by the word. Faith is necessary to a right hearing the word: not absolutely, for men hear that they may believe; but the word doth not profit us unless mixed with faith, *i. e.* unless that which they hear be believed and assented to by them. If either this or baptism had been converting ordinances, Paul's commission would have run that way; but he was sent 'not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.'

Since then it is no converting ordinance, those that are unconverted, who never yet repented of and forsook their secret sins, are not fit guests for Christ.

* Suarez somewhat enlarged.

But some will conclude the approach of secret sinners from Judas his partaking of this ordinance; but that is a question. Some think Judas did receive, others conclude he did not, and that he went out before the supper. Zanchy thinks it thwarts the story of St John's Gospel; Beza gathers that he was not there from John xiii. 30, 'He then having received the sop, went immediately out,' εὐθέως ἐξῆλθεν, which was at the end of the second supper, after which Christ instituted the sacred supper. The sop was properly a part of the rite belonging to the paschal lamb, dipped in the sauce of bitter herbs, which the master of the family reached to every guest, Exod. xii. But the sacramental bread was broken, not dipped in any liquor. Gomarus* hath this argument: Christ (Luke xxii. 19, 20) tells them his body was given for them, and his blood shed for them, without making any exception of Judas, which it is likely he would if he had been present, as he did in his prayer afterwards, John xvii. Judas had no interest in the body and blood of Christ for remission of sin; his sins could not be remitted, neither could he have any profit by the body and blood of Christ, for Christ calls him, John xvii. 12, 'the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.' And consider, Judas was in hell before Christ suffered death, for he hanged himself as soon as ever he heard Christ was condemned, and Christ's blood could not be shed for him any more than for any other in hell. It is not likely that Christ, who never admitted Judas to the choicest familiarities, should admit him to this standing token of his love. When he whipped buyers and sellers out of the temple, he would scarce suffer a devil to be partaker of his body and blood. If he would not pray for Judas, it is not likely he would give the symbols of his body and blood to Judas. As to that, Luke xxii. 21, 'The hand of him that betrays me is with me on the table;' being put after the relation of the supper, it is no argument for Judas his receiving it; for the evangelists do not observe always in their relations the order of things as they were done. Mark (chap. xiv. 23, 24) relates the passage of the supper as if the words of institution were delivered after they had drunk the wine and ate the bread without knowing to what end, and the institution had been after their participation of it. According to the other evangelists, this speech concerning Judas was before the institution, Mat. xxvi. 21, &c.; Mark. xiv. 19, &c. But suppose Judas did partake of the supper, what encouragement is it to a secret sinner at any time to venture upon it, when he may fear Judas his reward, and a greater power of the devil and his lusts over him.

Use. Let us look well to ourselves. Privileges must not be rested in securely without inspection into ourselves and examination of our ways; we may be odious in God's eye, though fair in men's. The profession of faith may be without the grace of faith; there may be knowledge without an internal and secret practice; much light in rotten wood; there may be a counterfeit integrity, a moral integrity without an evangelical; a repentance to be repented of, and a faith not sincere. Some shall come at the last day and tell Christ they have ate and drank in his presence, eaten his body and drank his blood in the sacrament, and be answered with a dreadful, *I know not whence you are*, Luke xiii. 26, 27. God will shut heaven's gates against many whom the gates of the visible church cannot be locked against. Something else is required to give a title in the judgment of God than what gives a title in the judgment of man. Ananias and Sapphira we may rank among the first of seeming converts, but made the examples of God's judgment for their sin.

* Vol. i. p. 471.

Doct. 2. It is every man's duty solemnly and seriously to examine himself about his interest in Christ, his habitual grace, his actual right and fitness for the Lord's Supper before his approach to it. It is not the first time of our partaking, but every time, 'so let him come.' Now, the second and third time as well as before; great preparations are necessary for great duties. The particle *so* bars men from coming without this previous work. Let him come in such a manner; if he neglects this self-examination, let him not venture upon this great mystery. Thus, Ps. xxvi. 6, 'I will wash my hands in innocency, so will I compass thy altar, O Lord,' alluding to the ancient custom of testifying the purity of their souls by the cleansing their hands, or to the washings used before sacrifices; or if we take Ambrose his gloss, I will with a purity of heart embrace the Messiah, signified both by the altar and sacrifice. 'So will I compass thy altar;' without such an inward purification, I dare not presume upon an approach unto it. There ought to be an inspection into ourselves, that there may be nothing disagreeable to the Master of the feast, or unworthy of his honour. If a care of our garb and carriage be necessary in our approach to the table of an earthly prince, much more when we come to the table of the Lord, where the mighty Sovereign of heaven invites us to feed upon those dainties which are the delight of his heart and the nourishment of our souls, the joy of heaven, and ought to be the pleasure of earth. Christ prepared himself for his sufferings; he examined his own strength before he engaged, had the assurances, security, and accepting testimony of his Father before he entered upon them, so that he had nothing to do but to suffer when he came to it; and we should have nothing to do but to feast with God when we approach to him to commemorate those sufferings. Adam's body was prepared by God before the inbreathing of a living soul, and our souls must be prepared before the entrance of a quickening Saviour. If we take physic, we prepare our bodies, that the medicine may have the freer and surer operation; when we sit down at our ordinary meals, we would have prepared stomachs. Shall we prepare vessels for our own service, and bring unprepared hearts to the table of the Lord? Would not we have meat but in a clean dish, and shall we lay the eternal food, the flesh and blood of Christ, in miry souls? Every ordinance hath a preparative; meditation is to usher in prayer, prayer is to sanctify the word, the word and prayer to sanctify other ordinances. This institution hath examination for its harbinger to prepare the way of its access to us, and our access to it.

1. This self-examination or preparation is necessary. God required it in all duties. Purification went before sacrificing. The preparation and examination of themselves as to ceremonial uncleanness was strict before the passover, which was inferior to this ordinance, as the legal state was to the evangelical. The mercy to be now remembered is greater, the duties of preparation and devotion ought not to be less. The death of Christ was then represented to be suffered in time, it is now represented both as suffered and accepted. The clog of legal administrations is knocked off by the gospel, but not the holiness, which is both the beauty of the soul and an ornament of divine institutions. The meanest vessel belonging to the sanctuary, the shovels, basins, flesh-hooks, and fire-pans, were not to be used without preparation by a holy oil, Exod. xl. 9-11. Much more ought we to be sanctified for the participation of the symbols of that body which was crucified for us on earth, and glorified for us in heaven. The circumstances at the institution require it; the room wherein it was instituted was prepared, Mark xiv. 15. Christ washed his disciples' feet before the institution, John xiii. 5. We must imitate him, and wash our souls before the

participation. The Spirit's sanctification gives a right to the benefits purchased by the blood of Christ. The heart, which is a vessel to receive the body of Christ, ought to be prepared, as well as the room wherein he first appointed and celebrated the symbols of it, or the grave, wherein his body was to be awhile enshrined. His body in the sacrament must be wrapped in a clean soul, as well as his body by Joseph in clean linen. Our Saviour entered not upon his offices without preparation by prayer and fasting, Mat. iv. 12, Mat. xxvi. 36, to set us a pattern of the like practice before any great undertaking. If men were to sanctify themselves before they came to the sacrifice,—1 Sam. xvi. 5, 'Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice,'—and eat of the part appointed for the feast, there is as much reason for preparation for the commemoration of the greatest sacrifice that ever was, the substance of all those that were offered before it. This cannot be without a previous examination of the quality and measures of the habitual grace in us, and what filth remains to be purged out.

(1.) It is necessary to clear up a right. There is an outward acceptance of Christ and his laws without a true and inward change of heart. All the Corinthians were called saints by the apostle: 1 Cor. i. 2, 'called to be saints;' saints by an outward calling, not all so by an inward regeneration. There are blazing comets which may appear bigger and greater than a fixed star. A gilded metal and true gold are outwardly like one another, yet differ in their species. There is a sanctification which is common to apostates from the faith, Heb. x. 29. The Scripture mentions a 'dead faith,' James ii. 26, which is no more a faith than a carcase is a man. There is a 'repentance unto life,' Acts xi. 18, which supposeth a dead repentance, like the humiliation of Ahab, dropping tears without a mollifying of his natural hardness; or Judas his sorrow, raised by the fire of his conscience, not by the look of his Master. There is a 'lively hope,' 1 Peter i. 3, which supposeth a dumpish and heavy-headed hope. There are 'lively stones,' 1 Peter iii. 5, which implies that there are some unhewn and rough stones, not fitted and prepared for the temple. There is a repentance towards God, and a sorrow which works death, differenced not in their outward acts, their shape and resemblance being alike, but in their inward aims. The building upon the rock and the sandy foundation might be of the same outward beauty, form, height; the foundations were different; the one firm, the other fading. Satan's children may appear angels of light as well as their father. There is a faith common with devils, there is a faith proper to Christians, *solis et semper*, always in the habit, though not always in the act.

(2.) It is necessary for the exciting of grace. That the soul may be excited before; that there may not be an ebb in our affections when there is a flood of our Saviour's blood; that our stomachs may not fail us in the presence of a full banquet; that we may not have little thoughts in the presence of great and adorable objects. The paschal lamb was not to be eaten boiled, but roasted, Exod. xii. 8, 9. The Jews say they were not to baste it with water, but with wine or oil, both inflaming, to shew indeed the mighty agonies and scorching sufferings of Christ; perhaps, also, to mind us of the warm and glowing frame our hearts were to be in at the eating of our passover sacrificed for us, that we may have fervent affections, without any chillness to damp our heat. To think or speak of the work of redemption without a suitable devotion is unworthy of any that bears a Christian badge, much more to have slight and creeping affections, when the great mysteries of it, with all the parts, are presented before our eyes. An actual exercise of grace is necessary to the concocting this spiritual food,

as an actual excitation by nature of that vitriol humour, or natural heat, or whatsoever other cause of concoction it is for the preparing our bodily food to be nourishing to the members. To give meat to one in a swoon is all one as to put meat into the mouth of a dead man; the vitals in one are extinct, in the other oppressed and languishing, and unable to perform their office. This excitation and exercise cannot conveniently be without an antecedent preparation and examination. In the case of the body, it is the work of nature; in the case of the soul, it is the act of the mind and will quickened by grace. The excitation of grace in the soul is not as natural as that of the concoctive faculty in the body, which is done without any act of our mind, as our breathing is. This will revive graces, which seem to lie buried under ashes, into a flame, and rouse up holy principles that lay dormant in a bed of laziness.

(3.) It is necessary to prevent sin. The apostle's direction to them to examine themselves, implies the want of it to be the cause of those miscarriages among them, which he taxeth in the preceding verses. After he had shewn them the danger, ver. 27, the guilt of the body and blood of Christ, he adds, 'But let a man examine himself.' To prevent the sin of unworthy receiving, and the danger accruing, let a man examine himself. As if he should have said, had this duty been practised, Christ would have had more guests and fewer executioners of him at his table. If this were always practised, none would dare (as too many in the world do) to approach the Lord's table only with a design to wipe off their old scores; and, upon a presumption that their consciences are cleared of their former debts, begin the same sins afresh with more ease. As those in the poet,* who besprinkled themselves with the water sacred to Mercury, and begged of him that they might more securely cheat and cozen hereafter. This is to offer a sacrifice into a wicked mind, Prov. xxi. 27; to bring devils to God's table to grow up into a legion afterwards; to make buds of sin to be full blown, which a serious and careful examination would prevent. Melting affections and an hungry sense are the fruits of this work, and antidotes against encroaching temptations.

2. As it is necessary, so it is universal. 'Let a man examine himself.' Not some men, but every man. The most substantial Christian, as well as the weakest, or one that lies drowned still in the deluge of the fall. All the Corinthians were not spots in the feast, certainly some were free from the common taint. If there be a Judas in Christ's family, the rest of the apostles were holy; there is also an Elijah, and seven thousand more that have not bowed their knees to Baal, in the time of Israel's apostasy. Yet the apostle excludes none from this duty. 'Let a man examine himself,' *i. e.* every man. Gracious men are best fitted for this work of self-examination. They should not only consider whether they have the habits of grace, but whether the prints of the Spirit be as plain as when they were first stamped; whether their grace be in such a plight and posture fit to meet the Lord Jesus in his great institution. A nobleman, when he comes to his prince's table, doth not only reflect upon his quality, kindred, and relation, but whether he hath a garb suitable to the presence of his sovereign. A believer in habit may want the act of faith; and partaking of the supper in such a posture, receive a frown instead of a smile, and bear away a mark of Christ's anger instead of a badge of his favour. Some of the good Corinthians, because of their carelessness in this, fell under God's stroke, had weaknesses and sicknesses sent among them, and some seized upon by death, which is called a chastisement, a temporal judgment, distinct from the condemnation of the carnal world,

* Ovid Fast. lib. v.

ver. 30, 32, 'For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.' God intending by this means to reduce them to their duty, and a reverence conformable to his institution, he chastised them with the goodness of a father, that he might not condemn them with the rigours of a judge. Uzziah, a good king, as well as Uzzah, a good man, may be too bold with holy things, and may suffer a temporal punishment, while freed from an eternal judgment. Every man is his own governor, and ought to ride circuit in his soul to make inquisition, and set up a tribunal in his own bosom, and cite himself before it. We must not only examine whether we have a wedding-garment, but also whether it be well kept and brushed; whether no moths be got into it, no new spots dashed upon it. A rich robe may be sometimes so besmeared and daubed with mire, that none of the gold-lace upon it may be visible, till cleansed. Graces are to be purified, as well as sins purged out; grace, as well as metal, for want of rubbing and exercise, will gather rust. The act of grace is as necessary to a partaking the fruit of this ordinance, as the habit of grace is to a right to glory. There being, therefore, to be a special exercise of faith, repentance, affection to Christ, these graces are to be awakened and quickened by a self-reflection. But of this I have spoke before.

I shall only mention two things.

1. Let a man examine himself, as to his sentiments concerning the nature of the institution. The apostle intimates it in the motive he urgeth to press this examination: ver. 29, 'For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.' Where he chargeth the not discerning the Lord's body, upon the neglect of this.* We must consider what an holy and glorious use those elements are destined to, and the glorious body of our Lord, which they represent, that we may not violate in the signs the honour due to his majesty. To discern the Lord's body, is to consider it as the body of the Son of God,† of God blessed for ever, the sovereign Lord of the whole world, the body of the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world, a miracle of goodness, the pavilion of the Sun of righteousness, the pledge of believers entering into heaven, a body purer than the heavens in holiness, and higher than the heavens in glory. Consider the design of this body: It was to be a sacrifice for the world, an expiation of sin, the ligature of the church to God; it hath been loaded with our crimes, and borne the punishment of our sins upon the cross; it hath undergone the chastisement of our peace; it hath been the purchase of our peace, the price of our liberty, the cause of our life; it bowed down upon the cross to purchase our happiness, and mounted up to heaven to insure it to us, and possess it for us. The death of this body was of universal influence to expiate our sins, the resurrection of this body was for the justification of our persons; it sunk into the grave loaden with our guilt, it rose out of the grave and ascended to heaven to be invested with an inconceivable immortality for our consolation. Angels cannot behold it without admiring our happiness, God cannot behold it without wiping out the sins of a believer, upon the account of the sufferings it underwent; he cannot cast his eye upon it without remembering what, and for what it suffered. It is this body crucified, but now glorified, this Christ dying, but now living for ever, which the elements represent to us, and that as a sacrifice, not as suffering an ordinary death. We must therefore discern the gift God presents us with, as greater than if

* Amyraut Paraphr.

† Dailié Melange des Sermons, Serm. xxviii. pp 300-302, somewhat changed, but imitated.

he gave us the whole world, since the Creator, who infinitely surpasseth the creature, gives us his Son, and himself in his Son. How can we have full and clear sentiments of this, without rousing up our minds, fixing our considerations upon it, and reflecting upon ourselves, whether we understand the nature of those mysteries, the design of the death of his body, and the glorious end of its resurrection? We cannot, without it, have a faith, love, and devotion answerable to the greatness of the things which our Saviour hath done and suffered in this body for us.

2. Let a man examine himself what soil he hath contracted since the last time he was with God; whether the interest of God hath prevailed in our hearts above the interest of the flesh, or whether some secret lust hath not spread its wing and increased its empire, which may have strength to waylay the benefits we expect, and be as a wall of separation between the supplies of God and the wants of our hearts. We must enquire what violations there have been of the covenant we made before, and bewail them: he is not fit to renew a covenant with God who is careless of the former breaches of it. Dust will be contracted in a house if it be not daily swept: our houses are swept and cleansed more solemnly before the coming of invited guests. Do we invite Christ into our souls, and shall we not examine every corner, and search out the dirt and cobwebs which may be offensive to him? The Spirit of Christ is a dove, and doves love clean places. The Jews, before the passover, searched every hole and chink with a candle for any leaven that might lie hid, and threw it away as a thing to be abominated. Have we not much reason to inquire what old leaven hath swelled up our souls, find it out, and manifest our hatred of it? whether we have not stored up some new nails, new spears, new gall which may afflict our Saviour, and be as bitter to him as the crucifixion; whether anything hath crept in to impair our affections to God. The nature of the ordinance requires this inquisition. Filth is not fit for a feast. We look what dirt there is upon our hands before we take what is necessary for our ordinary repast. A Belial in the heart, and Christ at a banquet, have no alliance. A carelessness whether we are defiled or no is inconsistent with this feast; and if any trash be got into our stomachs, it may hinder our spiritual appetite, and a hearty feeding upon Christ. Let that be the matter then of a good man's inquiry, whether he hath kept to God as his sovereign, to Christ as his Saviour, and to the Holy Ghost as his comforter; whether grace hath attained more strength and sin more weakness; whether the soul be more straitly or loosely within the bonds of the covenant. And indeed true grace is like the angel of God's presence, which conducted the Israelites to Canaan; it will not countenance any intruding lust, or pardon any iniquity, though it will beg God's pardon for it. These two inquiries are necessary to every man that hath habitual grace and fitness for this ordinance.

But,

3. We should enquire whether we have habitual grace or no; whether there be those uniting glowing graces,* faith and love. He that comes to the supper without faith, saith good Mr Tindall, is like a man that thinks to quench his thirst by sucking the ale-bowl. It is but a piece of bread we receive without faith, the symbol of the body of Christ without the soul and Spirit of Christ; and so we have no more advantage by the ordinance than the Jews which crucified Christ would have had, if they had eaten of his flesh and drunk of the blood which then issued from his body, or than the beasts had which drank of the rock (which typified Christ) as well as the congregation, Num. xx. 11 1 Cor. x. 4, which had no more benefit by it than if

* As D. Preston calls them.

they had drunk of any ordinary water. There must be an inward grace as well as an outward ordinance to have a spiritual benefit. Plagues come out of the temple, Rev. xv. 7, great judgments from ordinances carelessly and sinfully used. The word is the savour of death unto some, as well as the savour of life to others. Habitual grace there must be ; a perfection of grace is not required ; if so, then none but the innocent angels and glorified saints were fit guests. The perfectest soul indeed is not too good a vessel to receive the Lord of life ; but God requires only of us a disposition of heart suitable to the design of the ordinance : a deep sense of our misery, a lively sorrow for our crimes, a hearty embracing his Son, a strong resolution to be at enmity with sin, and at peace with God. It must be a diligent trial, as we would try metals by the fire. We may easily be deceived, and think that to be the echo of the Spirit, which is but the hissing of the serpent,* and the whispers of Satan.

The great grace which you should search for is faith.

We shall lay down some signs of it :

1. Negatively.
2. Positively.
1. Negatively.

(1.) Faith is not a general acceptance of Christ or profession of him. Many men's faith is built only upon human tradition, education, or the laws of a nation. Men's living in a Christian commonwealth, and owning the Christian religion upon a secular account, is no evidence of faith, because what is entertained upon the score of interest, will, upon the change of interest, be as soon cashiered as it was embraced. The ten tribes in Solomon's time professed the legal and temple worship ; but after Jeroboam had set up the calves at Dan and Bethel, they were as superstitious in the observing of them, which is evident by the complaints of the prophets, especially of Hosea, throughout his whole Prophecy. They were not forced to it so much by Jeroboam as willingly revolted from God : Hosea v. 11, ' They willingly walked after the commandment,' *i.e.* after the commandment to worship the calves. So easily are the vulgar induced to step into the religion of authority, and make anything a God that their ruler would have so, though it be a calf. Faith is an act of the freest choice, not a disposition which is derived by inheritance and succession from generation to generation, as it is with people who will be of the same ways of their fathers ; but it is a free election of Christ upon a sight of his excellency.

(2.) Nor is it a dogmatical faith, whereby we believe the truth of the Scriptures, and the divine authority of them. Indeed, there must be a knowledge of Christ, what he hath done and what he hath suffered, else there is no taking of him as God presents him. True faith is never without this knowledge, though this knowledge and assent seems to be often without true faith. There may be a faith to believe that Christ is the Son of God, without a faith to embrace him ; there may be an ointment poured upon the head, which doth not, as Aaron's, run down to the skirts of the garment, to the heart and affections. Many may assent to the truth of a proposition that Christ is excellent and lovely, who never bring their will to consent to espouse him ; and by a bare knowledge there is not an union to Christ, any more than by a sight and knowledge of a star there is an union with that star. Some scriptures seem to place faith in assent in the judgment of some : 1 John iv. 2, ' Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God ;' 1 Cor. xiii. 3, ' No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.' The apostle John in that gives only the note of a true teacher as to matter of

* Culverwell.

doctrine, viz. if he asserts that Christ is come in the flesh, is the true Messiah, the Son of God, and righteous. And the other place speaks of the gifts of the Spirit, not of the inward grace: the assenting to Christ that he is Lord is a gift of the Spirit by a common illumination. And indeed in that age, an assent to a new, vilified, and persecuted doctrine, was a greater testimony of faith than the highest external professions can be in the age wherein we live. An assent is the first step, but if it be not an approving, efficacious assent that overpowers the will, it is no more than a condemned devil may have. 'Putting on Christ,' Rom. xiii. 14; 'leaning upon God,' Isa. l. 10; believing in Christ implies more than a naked assent, which is expressed well enough by a believing God or believing Christ.

(3.) Nor is it a temporary joy in the doctrine of the gospel that is true faith. This is higher than the former, the other being a glow-worm light in the understanding, and this a flashy heat in the affections, and a joy in the matter revealed, Mat. xiii. 20. The seed that was received into stony places was 'received with joy,' which may be occasioned by the novelty of a thing, the suitableness of it to some interest or carnal affection upon some present necessity. Such have often been seen to revolt again. It is as a man's taking a servant whom he puts off again, or as the sending for a physician in a present fit, and rejoicing at his coming, and putting him off after some ease when the distemper is removed.

(4.) Nor is it a presumptuous persuasion of a secure and happy state. Many men's faith is a mere presumption. They take it for granted that they have faith, feed themselves with an empty conceit, without making an exact scrutiny, and bringing it to the touchstone of the word to try whether it be faith of the right kind. If faith were a persuasion of a man's salvation, then all that have not this persuasion are not believers; and then many a gracious pilgrim in this world, who have lived many years without it, or with a few glimmerings of hope, would be excluded from that rank wherein he stands in the account of God. If it were only a persuasion, none of the 'children of the kingdom' (as Christ calls them, Mat. viii. 12, those that live within the pale of the church) can be cast into utter darkness. For the command of believing would be no more than the commanding a man to be persuaded that his sins are pardoned, which would be the easiest thing in the world to a carnal heart. And God would command an untruth contrary to his word, if he commanded us to believe that our sins are pardoned, before we have those qualifications which are by the word requisite to the passing a pardon to us. Faith is not an assurance, much less a common persuasion. Faith is our victory, assurance the triumph; faith is an act of the whole soul, assurance of the mind only; faith consists in a direct act, assurance in a reflex act. Faith is not a proud persuasion, for then one in arms against his Creator might be saved in that state, with his presumptuous confidence, as well as that soul that lies clasping the promises and embracing the precepts.

But, 2. Positively, true faith may be evidenced,

(1.) In regard of the object.

[1.] It is a taking Christ. The act of faith on Christ is as a marriage act. Marriage is an act between person and person: 'My beloved is mine, and I am his,' Cant. i. 16. The union between the soul and Christ is a spiritual union of persons, as in marriage, to which it is compared, Hos. iii. 3. The benefits by Christ are consequent upon it, as the estate follows marriage. The person of Christ is the object of faith; the promise is the encouragement to faith.

[2.] Taking Christ as Christ, as appointed and anointed by God, as coming out from God: John xvi. 27, 'Ye believe that I came out from God.'

Faith stands by the cross of Christ, beholds him bruised by the Father for sin, and ventures upon Christ, because the Father hath set him out as a propitiation. If Christ be made sin for us, we must receive Christ as one that takes our sins upon him from the date of the covenant between God and him concerning redemption: as the saints of old looked upon him as taking sin upon him, and then slain, which was set forth in their sacrifices, laying their sins upon the head of the beast before it was slain, and in the scape-goat, whereon their transgressions were put before he was sent into the wilderness, Lev. xvi. 21. This is one of the principal things faith doth eye; for what warrant, what comfort, what encouragement to accept of Christ, were it not for this, that the offended God hath appointed him the Redeemer, and his death the way of restoration?

[3.] Taking Christ entirely, and that upon his own terms; to cleave to the cross and bear his yoke, as a prince and as a saviour; taking him as God hath exalted him, Acts v. 31. Where Christ saves as a priest, he rules as a lord, and directs as a prophet. We are exposed to wrath by the guilt of sin, Christ is a priest to expiate it; we are captives to the power of sin, Christ is a king to subdue it; we are ignorant both of our misery and remedy, Christ is a prophet to dispel the fogs of our ignorance. If we will be under the power of sin, we must be under the guilt of sin; if we will keep our sins, Christ will keep his blood, and be no Saviour to them that will be servants to their lusts. In the work of faith, the soul feels the guilt of sin to burden it, and accepts Christ to satisfy for it. It sees the filth of sin that grieves it, and accepts Christ to purge it. It is sensible of armies of sin which overrun it, and fresh recruits from indwelling corruption, and accepts Christ to conquer them; and such a faith gives glory to God, for by receiving Christ to satisfy for the guilt, it owns the justice of God which hath been provoked; by complying with the directions of Christ for walking in the ways of God, it honours the holiness of God, which it had before vilified; by bringing all the corruptions to be subdued by the royal authority of Christ, it acknowledges the power and sovereignty of God, against which it had before rebelled. It accepts Christ upon his own terms.

First. To serve him. Faith eyes Christ as dying, and eyes the end of Christ's dying. What was Christ's end in dying must be our end in receiving him. The great end was to 'redeem a people to himself,' *i.e.* to his service, a people 'zealous of good works,' Titus ii. 14; not only to do good works, but perform them with a zeal for the Redeemer. Faith hath always a holy ingenuity. To pay a service to him that hath paid the ransom, and lay out its strength for him from whom it hath received the mercy; to own no other Lord but him from whom it hath received the soul, the life, and all that it hath and hopes for. Faith takes Christ for a Lord, not to change him or barter him away for any other master; to perform the duties required, as well as to enjoy the dignities offered.

Secondly. To be saved by him. Many men would take Christ as a Saviour, but not upon his own terms; they would join something else with him; they would have Christ and salvation, but in their own way, that some glory may be ascribed to their endeavours, to the works of the law done by them: but faith is a willingness to be saved in Christ's way, merely by his grace. Faith is the band of marriage on our parts, marriage is but to one; since nothing is so excellent as Christ, he will have no rival. The bed of Christ must be kept undefiled. True faith, which works by love, is so ingenuous that it will never rob Christ of the honour he paid so dear for, and thereby own him but as an half and imperfect Saviour. It will not stand before God by any other claim than that of Christ.

[4.] Taking Christ's righteousness is the formal act of it. Faith puts a value upon the righteousness of Christ, and after a deep sense of sin, sings in a triumphant manner: Isa. xlv. 24, 'In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.' This righteousness is entertained by true faith, because by it the God whom the soul entirely loves is exalted in all his attributes. Saving 'faith works by love' to God, Gal. v. 6; and therefore, as it is deeply sensible of sin, because it offends God, so it cheerfully accepts the righteousness of Christ, because it is acceptable and delightful to God. Love to God bubbles up in every act of faith: for since faith brings us to God, it brings us to affect that God; and it is as impossible faith can act without love, as that a man can work without hands. The apostle, Philip. iii. 9, desires to be 'found in that righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith,' values the righteousness of Christ, because it was the righteousness of God by faith; so that this righteousness of Christ is entertained by a true believer, because it is a righteousness which doth infinitely please God. As in the pleadings of this righteousness for itself, it useth the pleasure of God as an argument, so in the acceptance of it, it eyes it as a motive. And were there anything in the world that a believing soul could think it should honour God more, or please God better in, than in relying on Christ, it would do that. All true grace levels the intentions to the glory and delight of God.

(2.) Consider it in regard of the adjuncts of it.

[1.] It is a mourning and penitent faith. The strongest faith is so. The stronger the faith, the deeper the sense of sin. Paul cries sorrowfully out, 'Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' after he had closed with Christ by faith. It is the work of faith to keep alive upon the heart the sense of the guilt, filth, and evil of sin, to make the soul have vile thoughts of itself, and high thoughts of its deliverer. When the law of faith is in the heart, the heart of stone is turned into a heart of flesh, and the lion-like disposition becomes lamb-like, and as a child before God. The horror of conscience is removed by the sunshine of faith; but the sense of the guilt and filth of sin is increased by the light of it. Abraham had the strongest faith and the deepest humility. How self-abasingly doth he plead with God for Sodom's safety, and receive the promise from God with his mouth in the dust: Gen. xvii. 3, 'And Abraham fell on his face, and God talked with him.' And is it not impossible for any believing soul to reflect upon the agonies, wounds, and dying groans of Christ, and his own vileness and sin for which Christ did undergo them, and not be filled with a godly sorrow and self-aborrancy? A proud faith is as great a contradiction as an humble devil.

[2.] It is joined with a high esteem and valuation of Christ. The soul prefers him in the mind and judgment above anything that can pretend a claim to its affection; it sets such a rate upon him, that all the treasures of heaven and earth cannot work it out of that esteem: 1 Pet. ii. 7, 'To you which believe, he is precious;' but how precious, the tongue of an apostle, no, not of an angel, can express. So precious he is, that the promises of angels, the threatenings of devils, the allurements of the world, the pleasures of sin, yea, and the hopes of enjoying ten thousand worlds, shall never persuade him to part with Christ. Alas! there is no loss dejects him so much as his absence, no purchase delights him so much as his presence. The weakest faith can appeal to Christ, 'Lord, thou knowest that I love thee,' would love thee, grieve that I can love thee no more. Faith and love are the two uniting graces, and therefore cannot be separated. To an unbeliever he is without beauty and comeliness, nothing desirable in him; to others he

is a pearl of great price, the head of the corner. Faith only sees the worth of Christ. It is joined also with high admirations of God for Christ, astonishments at the riches of grace and treasures of love. It works by love; it makes use of this affection to carry out all its services to God with thankfulness. The love of God is as a law within the heart of faith, which makes it return to God, as well as receive from him; and it can receive nothing without glorifying the donor.

[3.] It is accompanied with holiness; it is therefore called a holy faith, Jude 20. It must have holiness as a concomitant, though not holiness as an ingredient in the justifying act. Faith engrafts the soul into Christ, the root of holiness, and it draws from him sap for holiness. Our implanting into Christ, is rather to make us fruitful, than to make us joyful. Actions follow life, and actions of the same kind with that life which the creature hath; as vegetative life produceth vegetative actions, sensitive life sensitive actions, a rational life rational actions, so a spiritual, believing life, spiritual and believing actions. Faith is not a name, a picture, but a real principle; it is a working grace, and therefore obedience is called 'the obedience of faith,' Heb. xi. 8. Faith doth not only change a man's state, but alters his nature; hence we are said to be purified by faith, Acts xxvi. 18. As it goes forth to Christ, it is justifying; as it bathes itself in the blood of Christ, it is sanctifying. Education may wash the feet, but faith only washeth the heart. As we were in Adam, members of that corrupt root, we do partake of his guilt and of his filth. Being united to Christ, the second Adam, we partake of his righteousness and his fulness. It is a counterfeit faith which pretends to partake of the righteousness of Christ without a communication of the fulness of his grace. True faith employs the power of Christ in the subduing of sin. It is a fruit of the Spirit, and the Spirit doth not produce one fruit without the rest. It is the root grace, the root is dead if it have no branches, no fruit. Faith is seated in the heart, and spreads itself to the whole man and all the actions, as lines from the centre. It begins in the understanding, but hath its perfection in the will, descends to the affections; sends, like the soul, its influences out through the whole man. Though it be weak, it will have its motion. If it cannot go to heaven, it will cry to heaven. The remark Christ makes of Paul, an infant believer, is, 'Behold, he prays,' Acts ix. 11; as if he did not pray before in the time of his infidelity. His prayer now was of another colour and temper from his self-righteous, formal, cold praying before.

[4.] It is attended with growth. It is still climbing, and cannot get high enough till it end in vision. True faith is always joined with prayer against unbelief. It increaseth in its acts, and in the frequency and vigour of them. It first sucks the breast, and afterwards can chew the manna; it is looking much and often upon Christ. It is at first accompanied with tremblings; 'it may be God may hear me' and supply me; afterwards it comes more boldly, and loves to look Christ in the face. And there is a growth in all graces proportionable; for where there is life, all the members grow, the head doth not grow in knowledge, and the heart decay in love.*

(3.) Consider it in the manner how it is wrought. The word works faith and preserves faith, and faith improves the word. It is not a gourd which grows up in a night; there is much tugging to persuade the soul to venture upon Christ. Great power would not create a world in a moment, but took time; great power doth not produce faith in an instant; there are preparations and conflicts before the hand of faith lays hold on a Saviour. And it may be said, as Isaac to his son, If this be venison, how camest thou by it

* Dr Reynolds.

so quickly? If this be faith, how camest thou by it so suddenly, without much travail and labour? The word is the seed, the Spirit the sun that quickens it. By the word, the Spirit discovers the vileness of a man's nature, the sinfulness of sin, the fulness of Christ, and the freeness of his righteousness. By the word, the Spirit opens our eyes to see our nakedness and misery; the word proclaims the articles of peace, silenceth our reasonings, answers our objections, stops the mouth of a cavilling sinner, justifies the terms upon which Christ doth offer himself. It is not a birth of nature, but by the operation of the Holy Spirit. That Spirit that conceived Christ in the womb of the virgin, doth produce faith in the womb of the soul; so that faith and Christ are produced by the same Spirit, by the same power, by the Spirit that conceived him, by the power that raised him from the dead.

As there is a necessity of faith in the habit, so there is a necessity of the acting of faith in this ordinance. God will have our recovery in a way contrary to that of our fault; the fall was by believing the devil rather than God; and God will have our recovery by believing God rather than the devil. By the ordination of God, there is as great a necessity of faith to partake of Christ at a sacrament, as there is of Christ to make a sacrament beneficial to us.

[1.] Faith is of absolute necessity to regeneration, and only regenerate ones have a right to this ordinance. Faith is a radical vital grace; as blood in the veins is to the body, so is faith to the soul. No regeneration without the Spirit, and faith is the first grace the Spirit infuseth; no regeneration without the blood of Christ, and faith is the hyssop which sprinkles that blood upon our souls. Faith engrafts us into Christ, whereas before we grew upon a dead stock; it is from Christ, who is life, that life is derived to us, and that by faith: Gal. ii. 20 'I live by the faith of the Son of God.' We have no right to the ordinance till we have faith; this only makes us members of God's family. Till we are his children, we have nothing to do with his table; they are as carcases that want faith, and what should carcases do with meat?

[2.] In all worship faith is to be acted, much more in this. As in worldly actions we stir up the faculties of our souls, and the members of our bodies, so in acts of worship we must stir up the graces of the Spirit. Faith must mix itself with every duty: 'Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin,' Rom. xiv. 23. It comes from corrupt nature, or refined nature, not from renewed and changed nature; so, instead of a welcome, we can expect to be entertained only with cloudy looks. To come to this ordinance without faith, is to draw water without a bucket, to work without tools, and to go to market without money. There is need of faith to give us admission into God's presence, Heb. x. 22. There is need of faith to give us acceptance.

[3.] Faith is the condition of the covenant of grace, the seal on our part, as the sacrament is on God's part. No other grace hath God culled out to make the condition of the new covenant, and indeed no other grace hath such a congruity and suitableness to that end as this. When two parties are fallen out, there can be no firm peace without mutual consent. God gives his consent by offering his Son and sacraments as a seal; we give our consent by faith only, whereby we own, approve of, and lay hold on the mercy set before us. There is no benefit by anything in the world, but by accepting and receiving. The altar is a sanctuary, but men must lay hold on the horns of it. There are cities of refuge for some sort of malefactors, but they must run to them. God sets forth Christ as a propitiation, as a treasure of mercy; there can then be no renewing the covenant, unless as

God on the one hand reacheth out his mercy, so we on the other hand put forth our hearts to receive it.

[4.] Christ in this ordinance is represented as the object of faith. The serpent, as lifted up, was the object of the Israelites' sight, and upon that they were to expect healing from it; so Christ as dying is the primary and immediate object of faith. And being here represented as dying, it is not a naked representation, but that we may exercise faith upon him under that notion. It is not Christ as glorious, but as crucified, is the object of faith; for as glorious, he is rather the object of love: but the *formalis ratio* of justification is Christ, as taking upon him the form of a servant, and becoming obedient to death upon the cross. In this sacrament Christ is represented as offering himself to God, and God offering that Christ to us; Christ's payment in performing the righteousness whereby we are justified, and God's accepting and imputing it to us. Christ's dying was intended by God as the object of faith when he set him out upon the cross, Rom. iii. 25. And now he sets him out in the sacrament, there is the same reason for faith; and he is here represented more familiar to our faith than the person of the Father, than the person of the Son of God in heaven, that we may have more distinct thoughts and apprehensions of him in all the business he did transact between the Father and us, which are the fuel to our faith. As he was set out in sacrifices under the Old Testament, that those that then lived might exercise their faith in the promised Messiah, so in the sacraments of the New Testament, that we may exercise our faith in the exhibited Messiah.

The second grace to examine ourselves about, and to exercise at this ordinance, is sorrow for sin.

This is necessary to the supper. The way to an heavenly repast, as well as the way to heavenly mansions, is 'through the valley of Baca.'

1. It is necessary to that which is required to the supper. It is necessary to every duty; all approaches to God without it are but impudent rushings into his presence; repentance is *sanguis animæ*, the blood of the soul. As no sacrifice was pleasing under the law without blood, so no service under the gospel is pleasing without this. Nay, it is the soul of all the rest; hence a broken heart is said to be above all sacrifices: Ps. li. 16, 17, 'Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it, thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.' God had appointed no sacrifice for presumptuous sins, but brokenness and contrition was of force. We perform duties most lively, when a sense of sin is kept alive upon our hearts. The viler thoughts we have of ourselves, the higher thoughts we have of God. There is nothing so much honours God in duties as an humble address. But in this it is very necessary that we may with a broken frame suit God's apprehensions of sin in the punishment of his Son, and Christ's apprehensions of it when he breathed out his dying groans. To be hard and insensible, then, is a sad sign of a distempered heart. The blood of our souls ought in a way of gratitude to be bestowed upon him, who hath bestowed upon us the blood of his body. As Mary washed the feet of Christ as a preparation to his death, we ought to do the like in a preparation to the shewing forth his death.

(1.) It is necessary to that state and frame of heart which every person ought to be in. Faith, indeed, is the condition of the new covenant, but repentance is a necessary ingredient; faith and brokenness join hands together in their beings and exercises. The matter of the new creation is a heart of flesh, which cannot be without a tenderness in the concerns of God's honour. The new nature cannot be without new affection, and a

change of old sympathies into new antipathies. An insensible soul hath no spiritual life; a living member will feel pain. It is necessary to strong breathings after God; the humblest souls have the quickest flights heavenward. The fowls were created at first out of the water, Gen. i. 20; so are our winged desires from a flood of holy sorrow.

(2.) It is necessary to the ends of this ordinance.

[1.] Exercise and increase of grace. One end is to break the soul and the sin, and therefore there should be a preparation by repentance for such an end. If the soul be well heated before, a look of a dying Christ in the supper will melt it, and set the metal a running. There is in this ordinance the love and justice of God represented, folded in one another's arms; the strength of them single will do much, much more united. If we have not then a disposition to melt, we shall be more hardened, as things are by the sun that have no inclination in their nature to be softened. The end of this ordinance is to wound and slay sin by the power of Christ's death; and sin mourned for lies more naked to the stroke than when it is folded and sheltered in our affections. We come to have clearer and deeper impressions from God; and softened wax receives clearer and deeper stamps than that which is hard. Every grace receives a fresh verdure by a stream of repentance; the fruitfulest meadows have constant streams running through them. God's end is to represent to us the bitterness of sin, as well as his love in Christ; and, indeed, without a sense of the former, we cannot have a right estimate of the latter. What God aimed at in the death of Christ, he aimed at in the representation of it to us; and a part of our worthy receiving consists in our having suitable affections to Christ; and we cannot be affected with his sufferings unless we understand the gall and wormwood in iniquity. The bitterness of sin makes us taste the sweetness of pardon; mercy would be too cheap if given to an impenitent soul. While the taste of sin, the onions of Egypt, is in the heart, it will not relish the clusters of Canaan. We should have a suitableness to our Master. Christ is here represented as a man of sorrows, as one that with prayers, tears, and strong cries obtained an answer, and with blood obtained redemption; it is not fit we should be strangers to our Master's temper and disposition, and hug the spear in our souls that pierced his heart.

[2.] Comfort is another end, and communications of the love of God; and this is not to be had without repentance. The dejected, humble publican meets with God sooner in the temple than the flourishing Pharisee that rushed in. The sun refresheth the earth when it is softened by rain, but otherwise doth parch and scorch it. God will not smile upon persons hugging their sins at a sacrament. The wine of consolation is reserved by God for drooping spirits. Job must 'abhor himself in dust and ashes' before God will receive him, Job xlii. 6. Though he is as willing as able to revive the spirit, yet not till it be humble, Isa. lvii. 15, 17. The fatted calf is not slain, nor to be eaten, till the prodigal be penitent. The lowest apprehensions of a man's self are accompanied with the highest revelations. Moses and Paul were humble: the one a mourner for his own and the sins of the people, the other a great self-accuser, and both had the highest communications. If we would have a plaster, there must be a cutting off the dead flesh. Mary was bathed in tears when she heard that comfortable voice, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee,' Luke vii. 48. Dark colours are the best ground for gilding. If we therefore have a slight humiliation, only a little pang of sorrow, we may meet with a wound instead of a plaster, and instead of balm be put upon a rack. We must cry *peccavi*, before God will return an *Euge*. The soul that is most humble hath the first sight of God at the

supper. It will make us prize comfort. That soul that thinks itself a dog will be sure to value a crumb. Repentance makes us have low thoughts of ourselves and our own deserts, and high admirations of Christ. When such an one meets with spiritual comforts at a supper, what wondering will there be! That I that did not deserve a smile, should have an embrace! I that did not deserve a drop, should lose myself in an ocean! Oh, that I that deserved to be damned with a witness, should meet with a seal of his love! that for the flames of hell, he should give me the clusters of heaven! A deep sense of sin is the most powerful rhetoric to prevail with God. He would deny Abraham nothing, when he prefaced his intercession for Sodom with 'I am dust and ashes,' Gen. xviii. 27. The comforts of Christ's blood are not dropped into, nor can they enter into, a heart that cannot weep and bleed for sin.

Since repentance is necessary, let us examine ourselves what of this grace there is in us.

(1.) What is the spring of our sorrow? Whether it be ingenuous, from a sense of what we have received from God, as well as what we have deserved at his hands; whether it is a scorched sorrow from a sense of the fire of justice, or a melting sorrow from the kindly heat of mercy. The father's kind reception made his prodigal son's icy heart thaw the faster: 'I have sinned against heaven and before thee,' Luke xv. 18. The prodigal is the emblem of the Gentiles, and their call to God and repentance towards him, which must be, because they have displeased him. Without a true spring, our cries and groans are of as little value as the howling of wild beasts in a toil. It is then right, when it hath such a temper as the prodigal: I have offended a kind and loving Father, wasted his goods, resisted his Spirit, listed myself in the service of the devil; this Father I have contemned, a bountiful hand I have kicked at, a heaven bespangled with stars of mercy I have turned my back upon. We may weep at the story of Christ's passion, when we are not really affected with our sin, the cause of his sufferings, and the displeasure of God. Our sorrow is right, when it is not merely for sin, as it is contrary to our happiness, but as contrary to God's holiness. This is a conformity to Christ, who mourned for the sins of men, as well as suffered for them; and mourned for them, not because he suffered for them, but because God was injured by them. There was not a grain of malice and ingratitude in sin but he understood; he had also a clear conception of the holiness of that God who was offended and injured by sin; and from those two parts of knowledge, joined with an ardent love to his Father, and charity to man, he could not but have the most enlarged sorrow for sin, and the highest detestation of it, both as it displeased God, and as it ruined the creature.

(2.) What is the subject of the sorrow; is it the sin of nature; do we judge that the greatest sin, and not regard it as the common people do the stars, imagining them no bigger than a candle, when they are of a vast bigness? To bewail outward sins, and not that of our nature, is to have a philosophical frame of spirit, not that of a Christian. Doth the body of death draw from us the loudest groans? Do we lay the axe to the root of sin, or are we mightily busied in lopping off the branches, without a regard of the root? Are inward and spiritual sins the subject of our grief? Can we mourn as deeply for those sins that none but God and our own consciences know, as for those which are visible to the eye of man? Doth our hardness of heart, formality, remainders of hypocrisy and unbelief most afflict us? Is our grief for all sins, and especially for that which hath been the master sin? Do we oppose that which we have the greatest temptations

to, as David had to the killing of Saul, which would have helped him to a crown, which therefore he calls his iniquity? Ps. xviii. 23, 24.* Would we have the greatest Delilah no more spared than the smallest brat of Babylon? And is the enmity so great that we would destroy the power and strength of sin which lies in that master iniquity? Do we stop our ears against the strongest pleas it makes for itself, and wish as much its death as we do our lives? This is a testimony of repentance. Do we hate every sin because it is a falseness to God? Ps. cxix. 104.

(3.) What are the adjuncts of the grief? Is it in some measure proportionable to our sin, proportionable not to the law, but to the gospel? The first cannot be attained by us, because the injury done to God is infinite. What we cannot attain in the act, we should endeavour to attain in affection. Where the sin is great, great must be the sorrow: 1 Sam. vii. 6, 'They drew water, and poured it out before the Lord,' which some understand of the tears of the people. To drink in sin like water, and only to drop grief, will not agree. Is our sorrow permanent; is it a true grief, or only a pang; like heat drops or a rolling cloud, that goes away and never returns again? Is our sin, like David's, ever before us? Ps. li. 3. Have not many a slight kind of sorrow, sprung up only by the seriousness and solemnity of the ordinance; a seeming falling out with sin, but a quick reconciliation, and receiving it into a stronger favour than before? Transitory affections are too frequent. We find the Israelites in the temple weeping and lamenting, fasting and praying, because of their idolatries and false dealings with God, and shortly after returning to the commission of the idolatry they had bewailed. True repentance is always accompanied with a detestation and a 'revenge,' 2 Cor. vii. 11, which is indignation, as a furnace heated seven times hotter, not a faint and a dying kind of anger. Is the league between sin and the soul broken? As God seals in this supper a covenant of grace, we should be prepared to seal a counterpart of duty. As God is ready to seal a pardon, not to remember our sins to condemn us; we should be ready to sign a bill of divorce to sin, not to remember sin to commit it.

Love to God is another grace we are to examine ourselves about.

There is a necessity of this.

1. Spiritual affections to God are required in all duties, much more in this. The highest representation of a loving Saviour suffering, ought to have a suitable return of affection. Duties are regarded not by the multitude (for hypocrites may be much in doing) but by the affection; sincere persons are only much in loving. All that God requires of us is summed up into this grace, love: Deut. x. 12, 'What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to love him and serve him?' Men may delight to pray from a natural eloquence, which is (if I may use the expression) but as the trimming of a mangy sacrifice, and delight to hear with such a kind of affection as they would a lovely song; but every duty ought to be kindled and inflamed by the fire of love to God; and a mite of service with this is better than a talent without it. This expels weariness in our duties, and makes God's injunctions our songs, Ps. cxix. 54.

2. The object proposed in this ordinance requires the strongest actings of affection.

(1.) Christ is here represented as the cause of our happiness, in the foundation of the benefits we enjoy, viz., his humiliation, death, and passion. Here is Christ undertaking our salvation upon the hardest terms; here are the arms of the Son of God open upon the cross, the spear reaching his heart, with his affections streaming out to us in blood, when we were his

* Musc.

enemies, and had not a grain of affection to him ; and is it not fit we should be prepared to cry out with holy ravishments of affection, ' Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honour and glory ' ? This affection must needs be due to him who reversed the sentence of our condemnation, made our peace and bore our curse, had his hands nailed, his head pricked, his side pierced, his heart grieved, that by those marks we might be induced to love him. Who can challenge our affections if he cannot, who undertook our recovery when there was but a step between us and eternal death ? And how can we act such an affection if we be not possessed with it ?

(2.) Christ as appropriated to us in a way of union is here set forth. Union to him, communion with him, both depend upon love in each party. What can express a nearer union of Christ to the soul than to feed upon him, eat his flesh, and drink his blood ? Thus to have him incorporated with us, this is as the breaking of a ring, the renewing of a contract between Christ and our souls, a prologue to the great solemnisation of the nuptials to all eternity. Hence the entertainment Christ makes his people is set out under the notion of a wedding supper, Mat. xxii. 3. And being thus joined unto Christ, we are one body, yea, one spirit with him, 1 Cor. vi. 17. Now as there can be no mystical union with Christ without faith, so there can be no moral union with him without love. With what violence can we run to him, how can we be glued to him (*κολλώμενος*) without this affection ? As Christ in this ordinance makes over himself to the believer to be his in love, so the believer must make over himself to Christ, to be his in all service, affection, and obedience.

(3.) The excellency of God's love in Christ is here represented. Here is God bringing his Son from heaven to earth, from the earth to the cross, from the cross to the grave, making his wrath find a passage to Christ's heart instead of ours, pouring out his blood to keep us from bleeding, and listening to the pleas of this blood in heaven to answer the pleas of sin against us. This being the highest elevation of the love of God, was intended to draw out our love to him. Love therefore must be answered with love, not with enmity or a cold affection, we else run counter to the design of God.

(4.) All the promises are shewn to us in it sealed. All the promises of God bound up in the covenant of grace are here confirmed and ratified. And is not this a time for the love of the soul to work ?

3. The graces to be exercised in this ordinance depend much upon love. Love is the spring of the soul which moves every grace, and therefore it is called the ' fulfilling of the law.' Faith hath no operation but ' by love,' Gal. v. 6. Faith and love are united, as well as uniting, graces ; faith is the hand, but love is as the spirits which move it. And as faith and love in the habit, so in the operations they are inseparable ; we must cleave to Christ, and be cemented to him by faith, but love must strengthen the hand ; the more we love, the faster we hold. Faith is not sincere but when it testifies itself by the operations of love. True repentance flows from love. Mary's tears were most free when her love was most hot. The more inflamed our love to God is, the stronger will be our hatred of sin as that which is contrary to him ; the sweeter the remembrance of Christ is to our affections, the more bitter is the remembrance of any offence against him ; and indeed without it, we may see the print of the nails, and put our fingers into his wounds without any remorse. Delight in Christ cannot be without it. Christ cannot be much in our thoughts till he comes to lie nearest our hearts, and will never be our delight till he be our beloved. We cannot have high and raised thoughts of him, which are necessary for a transformation into his glory, without this. Strange imaginations will intrude them-

selves, and be welcome guests, unless this grace stand at the door to thrust them away. We cannot burn in our converses with God unless this grace set us on fire, nor can we have any heavenliness in this duty; for it is by this affection that we have our conversation in heaven in any service. Nor can we have a strong appetite to Christ in a sacrament without it; the stronger the apprehension of, and affection to, any good, the more importunate will be our longings for it, and the quicker our motions to it, and the less can the soul brook any distance between that good and itself.

4. The nature of the ordinance requires it. It is an heavenly banquet, and requires an heavenly frame. As love is the greatest grace in heaven, so it ought to be highly operative here. It presents us with God's love to us, and therefore calls for a suitable return from us. The heathens observed a suitableness in their sacrifices to the idols they worshipped. They would not offer a slow-paced creature to the sun, but an horse, because of the quick motion of that creature. God here wills the greatest good to us, and shall not we will the greatest good to God? An enlarged God should make an enlarged heart. Nothing is more becoming than that love should be recompensed with love.*

5. No benefit can be by a sacrament without this grace. Communion with God is entailed upon it: John xiv. 21, 23, 'He that loves me, shall be beloved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself to him.' Not that our love precedes the love of God in the first efflux of it, but the degrees and acts of our love, kindled at first by the love of God, are rewarded with greater declarations of his love. Where love is acted to God, there both the Father and Son will combine together for such a soul's satisfaction; they will come and dwell there by the Spirit in a more close, familiar, and strict communion, and more certain possession. Where there are the actings of love, though there should be no sense of any new income, this grace would bring a satisfaction in the very exercise.

Now for the trial of this love.

1. Let us not judge ourselves by a general love. As there is a general love of God to man, a general love of Christ to mankind in dying, and giving a conditional grant of salvation upon faith and repentance, and a particular love to the soul of a believer, so likewise in man there is a general assent, and a particular serious assent to the truth of God, and accordingly a general love upon the apprehensions of what Christ hath done in general. There is a common love to God, which may be so called, because the benefits enjoyed by men are owned as coming from that fountain; a love arising from the apprehensions which men commonly have of the goodness of God in himself, and a common love wrought in them to God, as to other things that are good. Again, men may have a false faith, and a false apprehension of pardon of sin, when indeed no such pardon is granted to them; so they may have proportionably a false love upon such an ungrounded belief.

2. Nor let us judge ourselves to be lovers of God because of our education. Many have no higher reason of their love to Christ, but because their forefathers professed him; and so upon the same score that any heathen loved his idol, an Egyptian his Apis and onions, or a Turk his Mahomet, or a papist his images, do many titular Christians love Christ. As among the papists many cleave to the popish principles, because their fathers did so, so among us, many have no other reason of their adhering to the Christian profession, and seeming affection to Christ, but the tradition handed to them by their parents.

3. Nor let us judge ourselves by any passionate fits of love, which may

* Nihil decentius quam ut amor amore compensetur.

sometimes stir in our souls. There is a love in the sensitive part which is the passion of love, a love rather stumbled on than judicially taken up; and those violent kinds of affections, whether of love, joy, or sorrow, are not long-lived. But there is a love in the will, which is a rational love, which consists in a consenting to, and choosing of, Christ, and is always accompanied with a true faith.

But let us examine,

(1.) The motives and object of our affection. Do we love God for himself, or for his benefits? To love Christ for the loaves, is common to the multitude. To love God for his outward mercies, is a natural love; to love him for himself, is a gracious love; to love him for his benefits, is rather to love ourselves, and love our own ends, than to love God. When the inducements to it are human, and not divine, it is a human and not a divine love. Many love Christ's dowry, but not his beauty; his merit, but not his person; as in marriages, many love the portion without affecting the person. True love is between person and person, not between person and estate; that is a true moral love, the other is a true physical love, but is defective in the due grounds and ends of it. Not but there is and may be a love of what God hath and promises, and the benefits he confers; this is a love of the reward. But when we love God merely for this, it is then *amor mercenarius*; when we love God for himself, and the reward in order to him, it is a genuine love; it respects other things for God, and God for himself. True love is grounded upon a sight of God, a serious and deep consideration of him, comparing him with other things, viewing those unmeasurable excellencies which are in him, upon which the soul doth judiciously conclude, that there is infinitely more sweetness and amiableness in God and Christ, than in all the pleasures and profits of this world. Thus the spouse compares her beloved with other beloveds, Cant. v. 9, 10. She considers what the world affords, and wherewith it allures; and after a diligent inquisition, the object of her love is Christ's person, the motive of her love is Christ's excellency; and such a love will embrace a crucified as well as a glorified Christ, a condemned as well as an adored Christ. Where God is loved for himself, everything of God is highly valued, his word, his ways, his ordinances. Christ in his whole latitude is beloved in all his offices. In his death as a sacrifice, in his life as a pattern; the power of his death, as well as the propitiation by it.

(2.) What is the nature of our love?

[1.] In regard of the prevalency of it. Do we love Christ solely, supremely; doth this affection swallow up all other affections; as Moses his rod turned into a serpent, did the rods of the Egyptian magicians? Doth it, like the sun, obscure the light of the lesser stars? As God is the chief good in himself, he must be so in our esteem. A true conjugal affection to Christ excludes all other things from an equal interest in it; an equal affection to Christ and the world are as inconsistent and prodigious as two suns in the world. The heathens knew the necessity of a prevailing love to their idols, to be at an expense for them. If the Israelites begin to be fond, though of a calf, they will deprive themselves of their jewels to serve it. This prevalent love of Christ is so necessary an ingredient, that it was the main lesson he pressed upon his disciples, Mat. xvi. 24, Luke xiv. 26. Self must be denied, if we follow Christ; all relations must be hated in comparison of Christ, if we be Christ's disciples. The soul of a man is too narrow and limited to be intensely affected with, and strongly to pursue, at one and the same time, two different objects. The heart must be a throne reserved for

Christ, where other things must sit at his feet. For as Christ gives himself wholly to the soul, the soul must bestow itself wholly on Christ; and as Luther, *Mallet ruere cum Christo, quàm regnare cum Cæsare*, I would rather perish with the interest of Christ, than reign in grandeur with Cæsar. A hypocrite wills Christ in subordination to inferior goods. A sincere votary to Christ wills inferior goods in subordination to Christ. Do we thus love Christ in that which crosseth most the carnal inclinations and interest of corrupt nature?

[2.] In regard of the restlessness of it. Can nothing but Christ and the enjoyment of him content us? Are there inquiries after him, industrious pursuits, unutterable groans, that nothing can satisfy us, no, not all the world, without him? Are we importunate, that he may be as a seal in our hearts, as well as we as a seal in his heart, that there may be clearer engravings, stronger impressions? A true lover rejoiceth that he hath any love to give to God, and grieves that he hath no more to bestow. His life is bound up in Christ, as Jacob's was in Benjamin. An hundred worlds cannot content him without his beloved. He is upon his watch and guard against all temptations which may disturb his affection or enjoyment, and accounts the missing of Christ worse than hell itself; all other things will be abhorred, and accounted as loss and dung, Philip. iii. 8.

[3.] What are the effects and concomitants of our love? Are we careful to please him, though with our own shame? Christ's love made him take the form of a servant to pleasure man; the soul's love will make it take up the meanest shape to please the Redeemer. Christ cared not how much he was emptied, so he might discover his love; the soul cares not how much it is humbled, so it may testify its affection. It is like the string of an instrument strained to the same height with another, which will move when the other is touched. A true affectionate soul will be conformed to Christ in its motions: Gal. i. 10, 'If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.' In the state of unregeneracy he pleased men, but now as a servant he would please Christ his Master. Are we in our bent and resolution careful to please God, without regard to the oppositions of the world? as the sun holds on its race, though the clouds gather to hinder the shining of it. Are we desirous of his glory, as well as our own happiness? Would we rather lose what we desire, than defraud God of his right? Our own happiness is but a created good, and therefore ought not to be loved for itself. Nor must we prefer the gift before the glory of the giver; the glory of God is incomparably more amiable than our own happiness can be. If a man doth all for his own happiness more than for God's glory, it is certain he loves that more than God; and if he serves God only for happiness, he sells his service to God, and he serves himself not God, for he intends only to advantage himself, not to glorify God. It was plain that Delilah loved not Samson, when all her projects were to enrich herself, and gratify the Philistines in betraying him; so if our projects be to satisfy ourselves, we are not lovers of God. Are the duties he enjoins delightful to us? Do the commands which were before burdensome cease to be grievous to us? 1 John v. 3. Are our duties not so much pressed by natural conscience, as sweetened by love? Do we esteem lightly of every service we do? True love never thinks it can do enough. Are we tender of his honour? Do we account the enemies of God our enemies? Ps. cxix. 21, 22. The Philistines loved their Dagon, when they would not tread upon the threshold where he had received a disgrace, 1 Sam. v. 4, 5. How is it as to constancy? True love will not be quenched by the waters of afflictions: Cant. viii. 7, 'Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.' It is a fire that triumphs over

the waters of the sharpest dispensations. When storms hang over the head, there is no repentance that ever his love was bestowed upon Christ. In this there is a suitableness between Christ's affection and the soul, in regard of the constancy of it. The creature's love hath its ebbs and floods. It is sometimes circumvented by temptations, in regard of the acts and exercise, though not of the habit, which recovers itself; as Christ's love hath intermissions in regard of the discoveries of it, though not in respect of the reality and truth of it; both are constant.

Another grace to be examined is love of God's people. This is the badge of a disciple: John xiii. 34, 35, 'A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you.' This is the livery whereby men are known to belong to Christ, as a prince's servant is known by the badge he bears. It is not, as Erasmus notes, if you use this or that ceremony, have this or that habit; if you use the same meat, have the same title, but if you have the same affection. This Christ left as his last will and testament, as that which lay most peculiarly upon his heart to be observed by them. When Moses was to leave the conduct of the people,* he gives them a commandment not to depart from the law of God. When John the Baptist quitted his function, he recommended to his disciples the disposing themselves, by the baptism of repentance, to receive the Messiah; and by the observing this and their fasts, they were marked to be John's disciples. The commandment Christ gives them a little before his departure, is to love one another, as the special character whereby they should be known to be his disciples. Hence it is called *his* commandment, as peculiarly his as the commandment to believe, for they are both joined together: 1 John iii. 23, 'And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment,'—as that which he took a special delight in. As if those two, faith and love, made up the body of the Christian religion. In regard of this commandment the apostle tells the Thessalonians, 1 Thes. iv. 9, that they were taught of God; and this Christ presseth again and again; for he repeats it often in that last sermon of his, which he would not have pressed so much, when he had so many things to deliver, if it were not necessary. He calls it a *new* commandment, not only in regard of the renewal of it; it having been as it were out of date, and wholly lost among the Jewish factions; not only because it is more commanded in the gospel, as sacrifices were under the law more pressed than this; but in regard of the pattern. Before, it was 'Love thy neighbour as thyself,' but they had no such glorious exemplar, before the love of Christ came to be unfolded to the world. Now it is, 'Love one another as I have loved you. So powerful a motive was never affixed to the moral law, which commanded love; former ages never had so fair and so full a copy for it as this. And so punctual were the ancient Christians in this, that Tertullian saith, it was the amazement of the heathens to see them *Animo animaque misceri*, their souls and minds united and mingled with each other; and, indeed, the more believers love God, the more they will love one another; as lines, the nearer they are to the centre, the nearer they are to one another.

1. This is necessary in all duties. Would we pray? Our hands must be 'lifted up without wrath and doubting,' 1 Tim. ii. 8. Would we hear the word? If we are 'swift to hear,' we must be 'slow to wrath,' James i. 19. Would we offer a sacrifice at the altar? we must 'first be reconciled to our brother,' Mat. v. 25. Fire from heaven will not else kindle the sacrifice. One of the leading sins to be purged out of the church of Corinth, in order to a due preparation to this ordinance, was malice, 1 Cor. v. 8.

* Amyraut, in loc.

2. But more necessary in this ordinance.

(1.) It represents the union of believers together. The bread being made up of several grains compacted together: 1 Cor. x. 16, 'For we being many are one bread and one body.' As the bread is a mark and means of the communion we have with Christ,* and as we declare by the participation of the external signs, that we have a communion with the Lord, do we not also make, by the same means, a solemn protestation that we are of the same faith, the same religion, with those that partake of those symbols? And since it is the same bread which represents one Jesus, it also associates us into one body. This bread is appointed to be a band to tie us to Christ, and to tie us in affections to one another. This ordinance was instituted to solder believers together. They have the same nourishment, and therefore should have the same affection. *Eodem sanguine glutinati*, knit together with the same blood, as Austin saith of himself and his friend. The death of Christ is here represented, which is an engagement to this affection. In this his death is shewn, which did meritoriously purchase this unity; in this we partake of Christ, in whom all believers are made one, engrafted in the same stock. It was the end of Christ's death to reduce all to a harmony, to still the war, not only in the members against the mind, but in his people one against another. Since we are to remember the death of Christ, we are to remember his will and pleasure at his death; when we remember our friends, we would at least remember their dying charge, John xv. 17. Doth not Christ press this in his farewell discourse, 'These things I command you, that you love one another,' when he was making his will to man, and his will to God? This was part of that will he was to seal with his blood. As Christ upon the cross was the highest eruption of love, so this sacrament is the setting forth the highest pattern of it.

(2.) No benefit of the ordinance without this grace. We have no communion with Christ without keeping this commandment: 1 John iii. 23, 24, 'This is his commandment, that you love one another;' and 'he that keeps his commandment, dwells in him, and he in him.' Passion is like a leaven that corrupts this ordinance to the soul; as anger hinders the concoction of bodily food in the stomach. When Jerusalem is a quiet habitation, the tabernacle shall not be taken down, and God will be a place of broad rivers and streams to it, Isa. xxxiii. 20. The greatest gift next to Christ, was that of the Spirit, which descended when the disciples were *ἰμθυμαθόν*, of one mind, Acts ii. 1. This being the design of the gospel, to knit men's hearts together in peace and love, those that have not this love are not cast into a gospel mould, and therefore not fit to receive advantage by a choice evangelical institution.

Let us examine ourselves as to this grace.

And that we may not mistake, every difference in judgment is not a sign of the want of this grace. Paul differed from Peter in opinion about the Jewish ceremonies, without any breach of love, Gal. ii. 11. Paul and Barnabas jarred so as to part asunder; yet neither of them can be supposed to be void of this, which their Master had so particularly enjoined them, Acts xv. 37-39. It cannot be expected but differences in judgment will be among the most serious Christians, while the blindness of their minds is but imperfectly cured. The strings of an instrument are not all of one size, nor have the same sound, yet agree in a harmony; there may be an harmony in affections, though there may be a difference in opinions.

But this love is true.

(1.) When it is founded upon the grace of a person. That which is most

* Amyraut, in loc.

lovely in Christ's eye should be so in ours ; the grace and holiness of a person is respected by Christ, not his outward state and condition. It is a loving 'in the truth,' and 'for the truth's sake,' 2 John 1, 2. A love of a disciple 'in the name of a disciple,' Mat. x. 42. As there is a common affection to God in men, because of his benefits, so there may be also some common affection in an unregenerate man to godliness, which may be the fruit of education, or an enlightened conscience, in some measure convinced that holiness is good. Holiness and grace are so beautiful, that the wickedest man would have the appearance of it, and would be esteemed good. But it must be a choice and prevailing affection, out of love to Christ, whose image he bears, flowing from a love to God, a spirit of regeneration, from the seed of the gospel rooted in the soul : Gal. v. 22, 'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness,' and is therefore set upon the meanest Christian, as the meanest box which hath a jewel in it, will be esteemed for the jewel's sake by those that understand it. The Corinthians were defective in this love, in despising the poor in their love-feasts, a mis-carriage the apostle blames them for in this, 1 Cor. xi. 22.

(2.) It must be a fervent love. 'With a pure heart fervently,' 1 Peter i. 22, not in appearance and faintly. The word the apostle useth, Rom. xii. 10, which is translated, 'be kindly affectioned to one another,' φιλόστρογγοι, signifies a vehement affection. For as God loves nothing more in this world than his own image, so those that have the divine nature drawn in them are in this part like him ; for God never draws any image unlike himself.

(3.) A love manifested most in their persecutions. To be ashamed of believers in their sufferings is, in Christ's interpretation, to be ashamed of Christ himself. At the last day, the trial of men is by their acts towards God's people in time of their persecutions, Mat. xxv. 41-43, &c., as if the neglect of that which he calls his commandment were the great sin to be answered for then. It is not whether we visited them when in their houses, in state and triumph, or fed them when they had wherewith to do it themselves, but when in a state of want. If a man loves the graces of a believer, he will love him in suffering ; for though suffering alters his outward condition, it alters not his inward relation or gracious disposition. Christ upon the cross was as dear to John, his beloved disciple, who would not leave him then, as when the people would have made him king.

Another grace to be examined and acted is desire, a holy appetite. The Israelites were to eat the Passover in haste, not *lento corde et ore languido*,* but with a greediness of mind.

1. This is necessary in all duties. In hearing the word, the desire must be as insatiable as the infant's cry for milk, 1 Peter ii. 2. Not the outward breast, but the nourishing milk conveyed by it, satisfies the infant. In prayer, there must be unutterable groans, strong sallies, and flights of the soul with a holy *inpetus* : Ps. lxiii. 8, 'My soul follows hard after thee.' It would have an infinite enlargement of heart to God, suitable to God's infinite fulness. This desire is expressed by hunger and thirst. No desire so clamorous as that of a new-born infant for milk, or of an hungry man for meat, who will eat his own flesh, or offer violence to himself, rather than want nourishment. But this should not be so strong as our desires for Christ.

2. But in this ordinary more necessary.

(1.) It is a feast, and appetite is proper to that. Were it but a crumb,

* Gaudentius.

yet desire were fit, as long as it is from heaven. If there be life, there will be a nutritive appetite, and desire of those things which are suitable nourishment. Now what but Christ can be suitable nourishment to the new nature wherein this appetite is seated? To come without an appetite upon Christ's solemn invitation, is a wrong to the master of the feast, and the cheer he hath provided; it is a shame to come to such a feast, and leave our stomachs at home. It is not a fulness Christ expects we should bring to him, but an emptiness with an earnest desire: Rev. xxii. 17, 'Let him that is athirst come;' it is an heavenly feast, there must be a suitable appetite. Evangelical food requires evangelical hunger; marrow and fatness should whet our stomach.

(2.) The greater the longings the greater the satisfaction. In great desires the soul is said to pant as an hart, and in speedy mercies Christ is said to run as a roe. When desire opens the heart widest, then God opens the hand largest to fill it: Ps. lxxxi. 10, 'Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.' Mary comes to the sepulchre before the other disciples, and when she misseth her Lord, is more restless, John xx. 11. She stays, and weeps, and looks into the sepulchre again, when the other disciples were more remiss and went away, and missed of the sight of Christ, which Mary was blessed with. The wider the heart, the more triumphantly doth the king of glory enter. We have according to our desires, as Joash according to his strokes, 2 Kings xiii. 18, 19; had he struck six times, he had utterly destroyed his enemies, whereas striking but thrice, he had but a treble victory. He that is so tender of a bruised reed that he will not break it, or a smoking flax that he will not quench it, will not let an hungry soul go empty away. God scarce gives mercies in a sanctified way, but where there hath been a restless importunity before. Benefits would not be prized without this: Prov. xxvii. 7, 'The full soul loathes the honeycomb.' The chapped and parched earth sucks in the rain after a great drought.

(3.) This is the noblest affection we can bestow upon God. God being infinite should be loved, not with a finite, but infinite affection. But nothing but desire can stretch itself to a kind of infinity, and therefore is most fit to be exerted in this heavenly and eminent ordinance.

Let us examine our desires,

[1.] Whether they be vehement. An infinite being should not be faintly and coldly desired. There ought to be a holy distraction in the soul,* as scorched bowels are full of pain till they get satisfaction. There is no question but an imperfect velleity, a languishing and feeble desire, may be in unregenerate men; they may have more or less some apprehensions of the good, which stir up proportionable desires; but the longings of a gracious soul are strong, spiritual, and produce mighty inward operations. As there is all sweetness in Christ, so there should be all vehemency in the acts of the soul to him. Is our desire limited to God alone? Do we apprehend him and pant after him as the greatest good, and Christ as the choicest and only Saviour? Is it so earnest, that if all afflictions were removed from us, all outward mercies bestowed upon us, this should not satisfy, but Christ alone and the light of his countenance? This holy longing can no more be stopped by any creature, than the sun can be barred by clouds from running its race. The whole world is but as the drop of a bucket after all the water is poured out. Would a small drop quench the thirst of parched bowels? No more can all the world answer the desire of a gracious soul, any more than a drop can cool the tongue of a damned creature.

* *Θεία μανία*, as Basil calls it.

[2.] Whether they are constant. Doth the fire in the temple never go out? Do settled apprehensions of Christ keep our hearts alive in their motions, or are they only like the fits of a fever, or flashes of lightning, which quickly vanish? Are they as pilgrims lodging only for a night, and in the morning leave no footsteps of themselves, no signs that ever they were there? Or are they kept up in some life and vigour upon the heart? In an equal heat it cannot be expected in this life, but when they flag, are they quickly revived? O let us seek God with our whole heart and with our whole soul.

A DISCOURSE OF THE UNWORTHY RECEIVING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.—1 COR. XI. 27, 29.

AFTER the apostle had laid down the platform of the institution, he makes his inferences suited to the case and miscarriage of the Corinthians. Since this ordinance was appointed by Christ as a memorial of him, and in the celebration of it 'we shew the Lord's death;' an unbecoming frame and carriage in so great a mystery, is a reflection upon the authority of it, contrary to the ends of it, and a contracting the guilt of the body and blood of Christ. As if he should have said,* While you Corinthians come together in a rude manner to this ordinance, as if it were a common and profane feast, the abuse and contempt redounds upon the body and blood of Christ represented by those elements. Calvin thinks the apostle makes a digression from the particular Corinthian case to an universal one, not only comprehending under unworthy receiving the abuses crept into that church, but all other miscarriages which might in the future rise up in that or any other church whatsoever; and indeed it is as a general case to be considered in our days, since the particular case of the Corinthians hath not its parallel.

He considers

1. The sin, (1.) in its nature, eating and drinking unworthily.
- (2.) In its aggravation, a guilt of the body and blood of Christ.
2. The danger, ver. 29, eating and drinking damnation to himself.
3. The cause of all, not discerning the Lord's body.

Whosoever eats and drinks unworthily. Whosoever approacheth without a consideration of the dignity of that which is represented by those elements,† and the ends of their appointment, regarding it as a common thing of no great value, and brings not those dispositions of faith and repentance, doth not reflect upon the elements themselves, but vilifies that which they represent; and offends not so much against the exterior signs, as violates the reverence due to the body and blood of Christ; and is so far from gathering the blessed fruit of this ordinance, that he returns with the mark of the murderer of Christ upon him; for he contemns the condition of the covenant, and consequently the blood of the covenant. The argument whereby he urgeth it, is the relation it hath to Christ. It is the bread and cup of the

* Musculus.

† Amyraut, Daillé in loc.

Lord. Though it be bread and wine, yet it is a sacred thing; it is the bread and wine of the Lord, instituted by him for his glory and our salvation. He doth not say, Whosoever eats the body of the Lord, or drinks the blood of the Lord unworthily, but *this bread, this cup*. The apostle was not so witless as to have termed them bread and cup, had the doctrine of transubstantiation been known in his days. His argument had run stronger: it is but bread and wine in appearance, it is changed into the real body and blood of Christ; and therefore your unworthy carriage is immediately and not relatively a violation of his person. But the apostle acknowledgeth it to be bread and wine;* but to distinguish it from bread of an ordinary use, calls it, 'the bread of the Lord.'

Unworthily. A worthy carriage respects either persons or things; persons, when our demeanour is suitable to the dignity of the person we converse with; or things, when we manage a business we undertake with a decorum and becomingness, according to the nature of it; as we say a man did this or that very handsomely. He that doth not observe a decorum and decency in a converse with a person or management of a business, doth it unworthily, awkwardly, rustically, or slovenly. So the word *worthy* is used: Luke iii. 8, 'Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance,' *i. e.* suitable to the repentance you profess. And Eph. iv. 1, 'Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called,' *i. e.* let your conversation answer your calling, and be suitable to the dignity of it. It is not any precedent act meritorious of the vocation, but a worthy carriage after it, suitable to the dignity of the calling. The apostle doth not say, Whatsoever unworthy person eats and drinks of this cup, &c., for then he had excluded every man, himself too. For who is worthy enough for these things? as the apostle speaks in another case, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' The apostle requires not here a meritoriousness. Merit belongs to Christ dying, worthiness to the believer receiving. He speaks not of the worthiness of the person, but a worthiness of the action. A man may want a worthiness of person to be employed in a prince's service, yet not want a worthiness of parts which fit him, being engaged in it, to manage his employ for his own and his prince's honour. Or if a poor man be called to a prince's table,* he is, because of his poverty and distance, unworthy to sit with him; yet being invited he may come; but if he behaves himself uncivilly and indecently, he makes himself guilty of a contempt of the royal majesty, in whose presence he is. Unworthily here notes the want of an evangelical frame and disposition of heart.

Guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. He offers wrong to Christ. The Jews were guilty of his blood, when they crucified him; apostates are guilty of his blood, when they deny him, Heb. x. 29. An unworthy receiver doth such an injury to Christ, that God will account him in the rank of the Jews that crucified him, and charge him with no less a crime than the guilt of the blood of his Son.

He eats and drinks damnation. Κεῖμα, judgment, which differs from κατάκριμα.† He eats judgment or punishment, which is double, either eternal or temporary. Final unbelievers eat it to their eternal condemnation; those that have faith, and are negligent in due preparations, eat it to their temporary correction. It is the effect for the cause. An unbeliever doth not properly eat his condemnation; for condemnation is not naturally or sacramentally in the bread and wine, but he eats that which will be the cause of his condemnation,‡ because not considering the glorious

* Musculus. † Rom. v. 16, κριμα εἰς κατάκριμα, 'judgment unto condemnation.'
‡ Estius in loc.

use these elements are destined to, he doth not consider how great and glorious a thing the body of the Lord is, which they represent; and so violates, in those signs, the honour due to his majesty. Not but that this is of itself, and in regard of the institution, wholesome and quickening, but by the evil disposition of the receiver, and the abuse of the ordinance, that which was ordained to life brings death; as the foulness of the stomach makes wholesome food turn to venom in the body. Therefore the apostle adds, 'He eats damnation to himself.' There is no such thing in the institution. The fault is wholly in himself, not in the ordinance. He abuseth that which would be useful to him, if he brought worthy dispositions with him. As our first parents ate their death in eating the forbidden fruit, when the fruit itself was not of a venomous nature, but by transgressing the command of God, they rendered themselves obnoxious to the death God had threatened. So we say of a man, that he hath swallowed his death, when he hath eaten something which makes way for the entrance of death; not only when it is poisonous in its own nature, but when it is unsuitable to the temper and state of the patient. So he that eats unworthily, makes himself obnoxious to the judgment of God, either to be tormented by his scorpions hereafter, or awakened by his scourges here.

Not discerning the Lord's body, Διακρίνων. To discern a thing or person is to separate it from other things or persons,* and give it its due rank and order, which is either, (1.) in effect, when a man is endowed with qualities which elevate him above others. As the apostle saith, God makes us to differ, *Τίς γὰρ σε διακρίνει;* 1 Cor. iv. 7, *i. e.* he puts a difference between us and others, giving us graces more advantageous than unto them. (2.) In opinion and esteem, when we value one thing more than another; so, Acts xv. 9, God is said to 'put no difference between the Jews and Gentiles,' *οὐδὲν δέλεον*, *i. e.* he hath treated them indifferently. So not to discern the Lord's body is not to esteem and honour it as he ought, not to give it its due rank; to entertain it not as a singular and divine, but a common and ordinary thing. When men disesteem Christ, they count his blood as common blood, Heb. x. 20. What is there translated *unholy*, is in the Greek, *κοινὸν*; so after the apostle had discoursed of the two elements, as representing the two parts of the sacrifice offered upon the cross, his body broken, his blood poured out for a propitiation for sin, not to discern it, is to have no higher opinion of the body of the Son of God, the wonder of God's wisdom and goodness, than of a common thing, and a matter of no value.

Or not discerning the Lord's body, is when our sense sticks upon the outward elements, and our spirits rise not up to view the merits and propitiation of Christ through the veil of the bread and wine, as if the elements were the things only we were to feast upon. It is a spiritual feast, and therefore we discern not the Lord's body when we have not spiritual meditations of the dignity of Christ, the atonement he made, God's wisdom, justice, and mercy in the design of his death. As Christ doth not put us off with empty signs, so he would not have us rest upon empty signs, but acknowledge his body and blood represented in them, for those ends for which the one was broken, and the other shed. The papists, to prop up their doctrine of transubstantiation, draw an argument for it from this place. The body of Christ is in the sacrament in its proper substance, otherwise a man could not be guilty of his body and blood.† For no man could justly be condemned for not discerning the Lord's body from other meat, if that which he receives were not truly the body of the Lord, but another meat; and the unworthy receiving of the naked sign cannot make a

* Amyraut, Daillé, Musculus.

† Daillé Melange des Sermons.

man guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But this is no argument.* Christ is wronged in that which hath a relation to him, as well as immediately in his own person. The rejecting the apostles, the messengers of Christ, is a rejecting Christ who sent them: Luke x. 16, 'He that despiseth you, despiseth me;' and he that despiseth the commands of God delivered by man, 'despiseth not man, but God,' 1 Thes. iv. 8. Was our Saviour therefore substantially present in the persons of the apostles? Were they not separated from his body, when he sent them to other parts, and gave them this as an encouragement? How could he be with them, and absent from them in his body? When he chargeth Saul with persecuting *him*, because he 'breathed out slaughter against his disciples,' Acts ix. 4, was the body of Christ therefore substantially in his disciples? He that hath received the knowledge of the truth, and apostatiseth from it, 'treads under foot the Son of God.' Is the person of Christ under the feet of these contemners! To tumble a king's robe in the dirt, to counterfeit his seal, tread upon his crown, daub his picture, break down his arms in despite, offer violence to his ambassador, is reckoned as a violation of the person and authority of a prince; yet neither the person nor nature of the person is really present in any of those things. They are indeed the marks of his dignity, and he that violates wilfully any of them is supposed to be willing to do as much against the person of the prince, if it were in his power, as against anything which bears his character. The substance of the body and blood of Christ, is not in the bread and wine of the sacrament; his exalted body is no more to be broken and sliced in pieces; nor doth it consist with his state of glory, to have his substantial body shrouded under such mean elements. But the bread and wine are memorials and pledges of his body and blood, instituted by him as signs to signify him; therefore he that receives them without a due respect to Christ, and handles them unworthily, despising those things which are signified by them, is a contemner of the Son of God, since he hath no value for that which is a mark of his authority and his love.

Doct. Unworthy receivers of the supper contract great guilt, and incur great danger. In the handling which doctrine I shall shew,

I. What unworthy receiving is.

II. The sinfulness of it.

III. The danger of it.

IV. The use.

I. What unworthy receiving is.

1. Something negatively.

(1.) Unworthy receiving is not proper only to a man in a natural state. The apostle chargeth here unworthy receiving, not only upon the professing, but the regenerate Corinthians, upon such as fell under the chastening hand of God for this cause, that they might 'not be condemned with the world' to an eternal punishment, 1 Cor. xi. 32. He sent temporal punishments upon them that they might not undergo an eternal damnation; they were redeemed from eternal punishment, renewed in their souls, yet some of them were guilty of unworthy receiving. The apostle also puts the unworthiness upon the want of a self-examination, which a good man may, by some supineness and negligence, be deficient in, and, as the sleepy church, Cant. v. 2, may contract some rust in his graces, yea, and fall into some bemiring sin, as a neat man may into a dirty puddle, rendering himself at present unfit for the entertainment of, and converse with some worthy friend. Sins of a higher magnitude, which a good man may fall into, make him at the present

* Daillé Melange des Sermons.

unfit for heaven, and therefore for an heavenly ordinance. David was no worthy attender upon the institutions of God while he lay in his impenitency, till his tears had washed away his iniquity. Nor was Peter restored to the sweetness of converse with his Master, till he had wept bitterly; while a great sin remains unpurged, or the soul through negligence untrimmed, it is no fit guest for God.

(2.) Unworthy receiving is not to be measured by our sensible joy or comfort after receiving. Two men that have perfect health have not equal stomachs, nor equal appetites, and consequently not the same joy in their meals, yet both in health. We should more consider how graces are acted, than how comforts are dispensed; the former is our duty, and necessary to a right participation; the latter is an act of sovereignty, and not our duty. God's dispensations are not equal to all; some have only tastes, others full draughts; some may have more joy than strength, others more strength than joy. Mary had a strength of love to Christ, before she had a joy of pardon from him, Luke vii. 47. Paul's grace was not weaker fourteen years after his rapture, though we read not of a second discovery of the third heavens to him. God was most pleased with our Saviour upon the cross, acting his faith in, and love and obedience to God, when he denied him sensible comforts from heaven, and was bruising his soul for sin. The life and exercise of grace is the root of joy, though the fruit itself be not always visible; we may seem to have a rebuke from God, when we are in the strongest exercise of grace. The woman of Canaan had no sense of Christ's kindness, while she was acting a faith stronger than others who had met with swifter rewards. Jacob had the honour to be termed a prince prevailing with God, in that wrestling wherein he received such a touch from God as made him halt all his life after, Gen. xxxii. 25, 28. If our souls can ascend, like Manoah's angel, in the smoke of thanksgiving and elevations of spirit, and be melted and softened by a flame of love, there is a worthy receiving, though there be not a sensible comfort.

But, 2. Positively; that is an unworthy receiving.—

(1.) When evil dispositions and beloved sins are not laid aside and forsaken. As there must be faith respecting the Christian doctrine, so there must be repentance respecting the conversation. He eats unworthily that hath different ends from what Christ had in the institution; and wants the qualifications which Christ requires, who hath neither faith nor repentance, no sense of sin, nor love to Christ, to hold up to God. Common infirmities render us not unworthy, but voluntary defilements: neither the poverty, blindness, or halting of one or other of those invited, Luke xiv. 21, Mat. xxii. 10, was charged upon them, but only the filthy rags that one of them came in; such sordidness as he might have mended, not the lameness which he could not cure. Common infirmities are inseparable in this life; but the great breaches and violations of the covenant are to be discharged. Every sin doth make some separation between God and us (as the smallest body bath its shadow); but they are the darling sins that are a thick cloud between him and us. Those then are unquestionably unworthy receivers, that approach with a love to their lusts; as Judas, who came with his covetous disposition and treacherous purposes. Such as lay aside their sins at present in the act, but not in the habit and affection, that shake hands with them for a time, to fondle them afterwards.

(2.) When, though beloved sins are discarded, yet there is not a due preparation suitable to the quality of the institution. The apostle implies it in the precept he enjoins immediately after the declaration of the sin: ver. 28, 'Let a man examine himself.' He that doth not trim up the graces he hath,

that doth not search them out, and marshal them in order to entertain the master of the feast, as well as he who wants those qualifications necessary. An actual as well as an habitual sanctification was required of Jesse's sons before the sacrifice: 1 Sam. xvi. 5, 'Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice.' Christ did sanctify himself before he made himself a sacrifice, John xvii. 19, so should we before we commemorate it. If the lamps be not trimmed, they will burn but dimly. If that he counts the wedding-garment be not brushed, it will be a slighting the Lord not to appear in our best garb. The Corinthians were chastised, not for want of grace in habit, but for want of grace in act. It is a disrespect to Christ not to put on a wedding-garment which we have in possession, when graces and affections are not set on work which the ordinance requires. A natural man is unworthy for want of possessing those graces; a renewed man unworthy for want of acting them. The party that so offended was not sent out to clothe himself, but punished for his neglect: 'Friend, how camest thou in hither?' Christ's worthy care in the institution must be answered with a worthy carriage in the preparation. He washed his disciples' feet before the institution, John xiii. We should prepare our souls before the participation. When a good man's graces lie dead at the ordinances, he receives unworthily. What difference is there between a dead man and one that doth not exercise the acts of life? When Christ reacheth out himself, and our hands are not ready to take, our hearts not ready to embrace, it is an unsuitable carriage. We have no great esteem of the gales that blow, if we will not prepare and hoist our sails to be filled with them, and stand not ready to suck Christ's breast in his ordinance.

(3.) It is an unworthy receiving when we rest only in the ordinance, expecting from the work done, what we should expect only from Christ in it. When we content ourselves with Elijah's mantle, without asking for the God of Elijah. Thus the Jews deluded themselves with their privileges, and displeased God with their neglect of him; like Joab securing himself by laying hold of the horns of the altar without repentance for his murders. This is to derive from the sacrament the cause of our righteousness and justification, and ascribe that to the naked elements and signs which is only to be expected and desired at the hands of God. This is a wrong to God, when we prefer the shadow before the substance, the shell before the kernel, satisfy our appetite and take no notice of the Master. Doth not he slight both the physician and the physic, that expects a cure from a medicine in his pocket, which he was to take into his body? The like it is to Christ, to think that a corporal feeding, without a spiritual relish, can nourish our souls; a chewing the elements with the teeth, without feeding upon Christ with the heart. This is evident, when we answer not sacramental engagements, as well as when we come without sacramental preparations; in that we slight the end of the ordinance, as in the other we slight the greatness of the institution.

(4.) When there is a garishness and looseness of spirit in the time of our attendance. Not discerning the Lord's body, say some; not minding the Lord's body, but letting the thoughts run at rovers, which should be fixed upon Christ's dying; not making a difference between this holy bread and common refreshments in the behaviour of our souls. Our spirits should be low in regard of contrition, not in regard of a sordid demeanour towards God. To have base ends and starts in his worship;* to regard our own things in this act, and not the things of God; to have unsettled and roving thoughts, crosses the end of this ordinance. It is unworthy not to remember Christ,

* Grotius.

not to shew forth his death; how can this be done without minding him? The Master of the feast is not remembered unless we look through the bread and wine to the broken body and the shed blood of Christ. We esteem not him that we do not mind, we value not him that we do not, with the weight of our souls, intently lean upon. Not that any man is free from roving while the flesh cleaves to him. (The involuntary startings of the flesh, the involuntary injections of the devil, do not make us unworthy receivers. God regards the willingness of the spirit to affect us, and the weakness of the flesh to pity us. 'He knows our frame, that we are but dust,' and dust is apt to be removed with a blast of wind.) But when the reins are let loose to the headstrong flesh, when we pull it not in, but follow rather than resist the motions; it is then that we make light of the dignity of this ordinance, and the great and glorious body of our Lord represented thereby. Neither can we understand every actual consent to such motions at the time of our attendance to be the unworthy receiving, which makes us guilty of the body and blood of Christ, though it be an unworthy carriage, unless we should count all the apostles to be unworthy receivers, who, if not in the time, yet presently after the first partaking of it, contended among themselves about earthly greatness in the kingdom of the Messiah, as it is probable from Luke xxii. 24. But when it is habitual, voluntary, and without a purpose of soul, and a 'setting the heart to seek the Lord,' 1 Chron. xxii. 19, such an one is not free from this character of an unworthy receiver.

II. The sinfulness of this. It is a contracting the guilt of the body and blood of the Lord. This unworthy carriage derives its original from that disposition which incited the Jews to a crucifying of him. Though there be not a blow struck at his person, there is the spring of as many blows as ever the Jews gave him. *Diversa peccata, par contumelia.* What hath been said lately about the sinfulness of unbelief might be applied to this case. I shall therefore say the less of it. Though there be a difference in the circumstances of the several sins, there is little or none in the contempt and indignity. He that doth despite to the image or arms of a prince, would do the same to his person, were it as much in his power.

1. It is an implicit approbation of the Jews' act in crucifying Christ. If we are not affected with that state of Christ, we consent to, and approve of, that act of his crucifiers; not positively, but privatively; not having that temper and affection of spirit which such an action doth call for from us. This is one way, among many others, of being accessory to another's sin, by not having a regret at it. He that makes light at the death of an innocent person,* confesseth him a malefactor, and that he deserves to be slain, since being slain, he deserves so little regard, or at least he makes him a malefactor, and gives just occasion of suspicion that he would have been ready enough to have imbrued his hands in that man's blood. The committing a sin is an approbation of all of the same kind that went before. Had it not been so, the guilt of the blood of all the prophets could not have fallen upon the heads of that generation which murdered Christ, Luke xi. 47. Whosoever hath slight thoughts of the death of Christ, and neglects those duties so great a condescension calls for, partly consents to the savage usage Christ met with from the Jews. They were the authors of the first crime, and an unworthy receiver the abettor.

2. It exceeds the sin of the Jews in some circumstances, as well as that exceeded this in others. That was against his person, this against his propitiation; they did it against one they accounted a blasphemer, we do it

* Pemble, p. 507.

against one we account not only innocent, but a Redeemer. The Jews tore his body, and an unworthy receiver, saith Chrysostom, defiles it, by putting the body of Christ into an unclean vessel. The sin is greater, by how much impurity and defilement is more against his nature than death and torment.

3. In regard of the relation the ordinance hath to Christ. There is an analogy between the bread and the wine, and the body and blood of Christ. The nearer relation anything hath to God, the more heinous is the offence. To kill a debauched man unjustly, innocent of any crime to deserve death, is an affronting God in his image, Gen. ix. 6. To neglect uncharitably a member of Christ is greater, because it is a despising of Christ in his mystical body, Mat. xxv. 45. This is greater, because it is an affront to his body and blood in the picture and representation of him. To fling the picture of a prince into the kennel, and stamp upon it with contempt, is treasonable in some places. A man of quality is not injured so much by breaking his earthen vessels, as by defacing and defiling his arms, the marks of his honour. It disparageth the whole covenant of grace in unworthy usage of the seals of it. How base a disposition is it to sit down at the table of a man with an hostile mind against him! to stab the master of the feast at his own table, while he is treating and entertaining us with dainties!

4. It is a great sin, as it is against the greatest testimony of his love. That hand which was afterwards pierced and nailed upon the cross for us, did first break this sacrament to us. He appointed it when he was to go out of the world, when he knew all things were given into his hands, John xiii. 3; when he knew he was to leave the world, and sit down at the right hand of his Father; he would then do a work worthy of himself, to declare his own liberality to us. It was the first fruit of the power granted to him. It is a violation of that marriage knot whereby Christ would have us be joined to him, and become his spouse. He only was the author of this. His crucifixion could not be without other hands, and the wickedness of many persons in bringing him to his sufferings. But this acknowledgeth him only the author. The motive of his sufferings was the satisfaction of his Father's justice, as well as his love to us; this hath purely his own love for the spring of it. His suffering was a part of his obedience; but the only motive of this institution was his kindness. And the apostle prefaceth this institution (as it may seem) with a manifestation of his love, 'having loved his own, he loved them to the end,' John xiii. 1, as if he could not leave a higher pledge of his love than this; since he could not leave himself, he would leave his picture.

III. The danger of this sin, he 'eats and drinks damnation to himself.' As the sin is set forth in the greatest blackness, so is the punishment in the greatest dreadfulness. The sin subjects us to the same punishment that was reserved for the crucifiers of Christ. God inflicts upon his own temporal corrections, upon final unbelievers eternal; he useth his rods on some, his axes on others. It is but reason the severity upon the offender should be proportionable to the communications to the worthy receiver. Where his liberality is unworthily used, his severity shall be justly felt.

He eats and drinks damnation to himself. Damnation is not the end of the ordinance, no more than it is the end of the gospel, or of Christ's coming into the world. The supper was appointed for holy and beneficial ends, but the unworthiness of the receiver turns that into a sword which was intended for food. Worms grew from that manna which was intended for a blessing, when they used it not according to the command of God, Exod. xvi. 20. Rain is to make the earth fruitful; and where it meets with a good soil, it opens the womb of the earth to bring forth wholesome plants; but where it lights upon a bad soil, it brings forth briars and thorns. It is not the fault

of the rain, but the disposition of the ground, which produceth hurtful and venomous plants which are 'nigh unto cursing,' Heb. vi. 7. So the ordinance is bread to strengthen, wine to refresh; but where the wickedness of a man is mixed with it, there is poison in it, a piercing hook under a delightful bait. The word is a savour of life and a savour of death, 2 Cor. ii. 16; a savour of life when mixed with faith, a savour of death when mixed with unbelief. Where the blood of Christ doth not cure, it inflames a wound; where it doth not save, it condemns; that which is not melted by the sun grows into a greater hardness. Christ, as a sacrifice on the cross, was pleasing to God, as the murdered innocent a burden of guilt on the Jews; so as he is grateful food in the sacrament to a worthy receiver, he is the bane of an unworthy communicant by reason of his unholiness. It was a sad cut to David to be guilty of the blood of Uriah, whose blood, though not shed by his hand, was designed by him to be spilt in the service of his country; yet how was his soul galled for it, and his son afterwards in the head of an army against him for his punishment? What a crime is it to kill a child in the womb, who never yet saw the light? What is it then to murder the Son of God in the signs of his body, the Saviour of the world, the king of glory, whose blood is unconceivably more precious than the blood of all men, the life of all angels; doth not this deserve a severe correction?

IV. The use.

1. The manner of duties must be regarded as well as the matter. The matter of this ordinance is participated by both the worthy and the unworthy receiver. The manner makes the difference. The same matter of prayer may be put up by two several persons, the one accepted, the other rejected; one offers it with a wicked, the other with a sincere mind, Prov. xxi. 27. The eating the passover 'otherwise than it was written,' was dangerous, and needed Hezekiah's prayer to God for a pardon of them, 2 Chron. xxx. 18. He that came 'without a wedding garment' could have relished the sweetness of the meat, but, intruding in an unbecoming garb, was turned out as unfit for the king's table. As God hath the love of a friend, so he hath the greatness of a sovereign. He will not be treated with as an ordinary friend, but 'sanctified in all that draw near to him,' Lev. x. 3. His gracious indulgence must not diminish our awful thoughts of his majesty. Though it is a crucified Christ we remember, one clothed with infirmities, yet it is one that hath dropped his mantle, and is exalted at the right of the majesty on high. Since he is God in heaven, we must not be hasty to present ourselves in an unbecoming garb before him: Eccles. v. 2, 'Let not thy heart be hasty to utter anything before God, for God is in heaven.' Circumstances in worship are more than ciphers; but if they were no more, take away all the ciphers joined with an unit, how is the sum curtailed to nothing?* The voluntary omission of a circumstance necessary to an action doth not excuse but aggravate.

2. The holiness of an ordinance will not excuse a miscarriage in it. Some are nourished by this ordinance, others pollute themselves. The fruit is not according to the holiness of the ordinance, but the disposition of the receiver. Before the destruction of the temple, Ezek. x. 2, God saith, 'Fill thy hand with coals, and scatter them over the city.' The fire in the temple, which they thought was to serve for the expiation of their sin, should serve for the destruction of the city. The temple hath thunders and lightnings in it as well as music, Rev. iv. 5. The most wholesome food sinks † under the power of corrupt humours in the stomach. Nadab and Abihu were the true priests of God; they intended to offer incense to the true God.

* Durand.

† Qu. 'stinks'?—Ed.

The incense was according to the mind of God, and the censers were of the consecrated vessels. They erred only in taking strange fire, which God had not commanded, and this cost them their lives, Lev. x. 1, 2. We may have right ordinances, direct our addresses to the true God; but the holiness of those will not excuse the want of heavenly fire, the grace of the Spirit, and the want of a due value of the mediation of Christ.

3. The sins of those that draw nearest to God are the blackest. Never was anything termed a guilt of the body and blood of Christ but the Jews' wickedness in crucifying, men's apostasy in denying him after knowledge, and the abuse of this ordinance, and that not only in the unregenerate Corinthians, but in the best that were guilty of those miscarriages; he taketh whosoever eats and drinks unworthily. An universal participle.

4. The ground of our mischief is always in ourselves. It is not from the emptiness of the ordinance, that is a full cistern; nor from the shortness of God's grace, he is an overflowing fountain; but from want of those graces, or of exercising those graces, which are the bucket to draw and the mouth to drink. The plantain is not poisonous in its nature, but the venomous nature of the toad turns it into poison. Misery ariseth not from the insufficiency of the sacrament, but the unworthiness of the receiver. That judgment is conveyed to one, when grace is conveyed to another, is our own fault. The door is open, but unbelief pulls to the door and locks it. The miseries rained down upon us are but the ascended vapours of our own sin. Christ hath an hand to reach the benefit to us upon our worthiness, and a hand to inflict the punishment on us upon our abuse; he makes himself a feast for the believer's faith, but the unbeliever makes himself a feast for the Redeemer's wrath.

5. We see here the base nature of sin. It changeth the brightest ordinances, makes the waters of the sanctuary bitter, turns food into poison, and a cup of salvation into one of damnation. We frustrate God's expectations when he looks for fruit; then it is just he should frustrate ours when we look for food.

6. If an unworthy receiver be guilty of the body and blood of Christ, a worthy receiver hath a special interest in the body and blood of Christ. He hath as much advantage thereby as the other hath guilt. The apostle speaks this to put a bar to the Corinthians' sin, to make them sensible of their unreasonable miscarriage, not to scare them from the ordinance, but to excite them to come to it in a becoming manner, so as to honour God and benefit themselves; that they might sheathe God's sword, and not draw it against themselves. Though the Red Sea swallowed up the Egyptians that would venture into it, yet it was a wall to preserve and deliver the Israelites from the hands of their enemies. He that receives worthily, eats and drinks salvation to himself, by the rule of contraries. The ordinance comes upon him like rain, fitting him to bring forth herbs meet for the use of him that dressed him; and such a person receives blessing from God, Heb. vi. 7. Certainly that Christ, that never turned away a little faith without a blessing when he was upon earth, will much less now disappoint it when it is exercised on him. Since in heaven there is no diminution of his compassion, there can be no increase of his severity to such an one.

7. Should not all of us, that have at any time of our lives been partakers of this ordinance, reflect upon ourselves, yea, the best of us? Can any of us say that we never contracted the guilt of the body and blood of Christ; that we always had some worthy dispositions for him; that our minds were never wavering, our hearts never cold, our affections never languishing, our spirits, that should have been in heaven, never sunk to the earth? Is there not then a partial guilt? Yet God hath admitted us again and again, spread

his table, filled his cup, put manna into our mouths, and his cup into our hands. Wonderful patience in God, to bear with a wonderful sin in us! 'Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God,' may be the cry of every one of us, as it was David's, Ps. li. 14. How often have we wounded him that hath delivered us, killed him that hath saved us, abused that blood that was the price of no less than the redemption of our souls and bodies! Who doth not condemn the Jews for crucifying the Lord of life in his infirmities? And ought we not as well to condemn ourselves for crucifying the Lord of life in his glory?

8. How, then, should we take heed, whenever we approach to the Lord's table, of any unworthy demeanour towards him, whereby to contract such guilt and incur such displeasure? How should we endeavour after as clear affections to Christ as he bears to us, with meltings of heart and faintings of soul for him? We receive benefit according to our worthiness. As we prepare our souls for God, so he prepares himself for us: Isa. lxiv. 5, 'Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and works righteousness, that remembers thee in thy ways.' He is a feast of fat things to them that have faith to receive him. If we value not the pledges of his love, we shall bear the marks of his indignation. Adam, the first rebel of mankind, had the sweetness of a promise, and was not given up to that justice of God which he had provoked, and the malice of that devil whose temptation he had swallowed. Nor was Peter, who, in the denial of his loving Master in so base a manner, had gratified the devil, given up to be winnowed by him. But the first that ever offended in an unworthy receiving the Supper (if he did receive it) was, without remedy, given up as a possession to that devil who had animated him to his treacherous design. It is a dreadful eating when attended with such a sin and such a judgment. To receive worthily is to be affected with the sufferings of Christ; the cause of those sufferings, sin; the end of those sufferings, redemption from the guilt and filth of sin; the acceptance of those sufferings by God, the confirmation of the fruits of them; to cast ourselves into the arms of a crucified Saviour, washing our souls in his blood; pleading his merits before God, humbly and believingly applying them to ourselves. Let us, then, raise up our spirits, drink deep of the cup of salvation, drink abundantly of that love which is sweeter than wine. If we come before him in a becoming posture, with our hearts burning, our souls thirsting, our drooping faith may be then revived, our closed eyes opened, dark shades may fly away. The disciples that knew not Christ in the way, neither by the features of his countenance, nor the spirituality of his discourse, yet knew him in the efficacy of a sacrament, if that were the celebration of it, as some think, which is mentioned Luke xxiv. 30, 31. He withheld his grace before, to honour this ordinance with it. Let, then, the bounty of Christ engage us.* He hath not given us a hand or an arm, his head or his feet, a few drops of his blood, but his whole body, his whole soul, his graces, his virtues, the fruits of his death, to be participated by us, to be insouled with us. He hath given himself wholly for a sacrifice; he hath given himself wholly in a sacrament; a greater gift could not be given on the cross; a greater gift cannot be given at a table. He is given for our comfort, our refreshment, our physic, our victory. The relation the sacrament hath to the sacrifice, and the benefits conveyed to us, call for a becoming carriage from us. Let us discern the Lord's body, which is the mystery and subject of the sacrament; value it in its due rank as the price of our redemption, the delight of God, the admiration of angels, a body that hath nothing comparable unto it in the whole world.

* Lingend. de Eucharist. p. 185.

least, had not so illustrious an evidence as the others had, who outstripped the rest of their brethren in those miraculous powers. The gift of miracles was an evidence that Christ was in those instruments, in regard of his power, but true faith only is an evidence that Christ is in a man in regard of his grace.

Examine yourselves, Πειράζετε. Tempt yourselves. The word *tempting* is sometimes taken for trying, as when God is said to *tempt* Abraham in commanding him to sacrifice his son, to know or make known to him that he feared God, Gen. xxii. 1, 12.

Prove yourselves, Δοκιμάζετε. Try yourselves as goldsmiths do metals; prove yourselves, that you may know experimentally what is in you. *Δοκιμή* is used for experience, Rom. v. 5.

The phrase speaks diligence in this work, the repetition intimates both diligence and frequency; what is not known in one act, may be known in repeated acts. Self-examination is a duty in all cases, the repetition speaks necessity; it implies also men's natural backwardness to it.

Know you not your own selves. It implies the folly and unreasonableness of the neglect of it, also the possibility and easiness, upon a due and diligent inquiry, to know whether Christ be in us or no.

How that Christ is in you. Whether the power of Christ hath not wrought in you to the transforming your soul.

Unless you be reprobates, Ἀδόκιμοι. The apostle doth not understand by the word *reprobates*, such as are eternally rejected by God, as *reprobates* are opposed to the elect. Those that had not Christ in them at that time might have him afterwards, the work of conversion being daily promoted in the church; but *reprobates*, *i.e.* counterfeit, adulterate, not yet purified and refined from your dross, or, unless you are unapproved or void of judgment, or unexperienced in the ways of Christ. And he puts *μή τι*, a diminutive term, *unless* you be somewhat and in part sincere. Or it may go further, and the apostle might mean thus: if after the power of Christ, which hath appeared so gloriously among you, you find no strong operation in your own souls towards him, you have reason to suspect that you are not owned by him, that he may give you over to yourselves.

The protestants confirm the doctrine of the possibility of assurance, and a man's knowledge of himself to be in a state of grace from this text, which doctrine the papists impugn.* It is strange that some of the schoolmen, who assert that a man may by the strength of pure natural love God above all things, yet deny that a man can know that he loves God above all.

In the verse, observe,

1. The duty expressed: *examine yourselves, prove yourselves.*
2. The matter of it: *whether you be in the faith.*
3. The enforcement and motive: *except you are reprobates.*

Doct. Self-examination is a necessary duty, belonging to every one in the church, and requires much diligence in the performing of it.

Hence some observe, that when it is expressed that God created man in his own image,—Gen. i. 27, 'In the image of God created he him,'—the word is *Elohim*, which is a name of God belonging to his judicial acts, which imply trial and examination; in the image of *Elohim* created he him, *i.e.* with a power of self-trial and self-judging. This self-examination is an exact and thorough search into a man's self, an exquisite consideration in what posture he stands to God. The word is the rule, a glass wherein we see God's will; and conscience is the examiner, that is, the glass wherein we see our lives and the motions of our hearts, and which, by the help of the word, doth dissect and open the soul to itself.

* Catharin. in loc.

I shall not prosecute this doctrine fully, only lay down some conclusions.

1. It is a necessary duty, in regard of our comfort. What good doth it do a man to hear that a Christ is sent to redeem, that a ransom is paid, that sin is pardonable, hell avoidable, heaven attainable, upon the conditions of faith, and not know whether he hath so advantageous a grace in him, which only entitles him to such glorious privileges? What comfort in Christ, in his meritorious passion, in his triumphant resurrection and ascension, in his prevalent intercession, unless we know that by faith we are united to him, and consequently have an interest in all the gracious fruits of his different states of humiliation and exaltation? If we can find this grace in our souls, what a joy unspeakable doth result from thence? Christ as a king will protect my soul, Christ as a priest hath expiated my sins, Christ as a prophet will remove my ignorance; my soul was in his mind upon the cross, my concerns are in his breast in heaven, my name is enrolled in the register of his subjects.

It is necessary,

(1.) Because there are common graces. As there is an outward and inward call, so there is an outward profession and an inward transformation. There are some virtues come from the hand of God as creator, and some immediately from the Spirit as a renewer; some common virtues for the preservation of human society, and some special graces for the fabric of an invisible church. There is an acceptance of the law for an outward practice, without an affection to the lawgiver, or an esteem of the spirituality of the law itself. There is a sanctification in opposition to Judaism, or Paganism, or some erroneous opinion; which is common to those that may apostatise, Heb. x. 29. The apostle calls the church of Corinth saints: 1 Cor. i. 2, 'called to be saints;' saints by vocation outwardly, not all saints by a new vocation inwardly.

(2.) Because there are counterfeit graces. There is much false coin in the world, washed pewter and gilded brass; there are sepulchres garnished outwardly, and full of rottenness and stench within; there are many that want not their artifices in religion as well as in common converse. Good things may be imitated when they are not rooted. We have heard of some limners that have represented Christ so to the life as to deceive artists as skilful as themselves. The apostle speaks of 'a dead faith,' James ii. 26, which is like the carcase of a man without life, a faith that deserves no more the name of faith than the carcase doth the title of a man when the enlivening and principal part is fled. There is a 'repentance unto life,' Acts xi. 18, which supposeth a dead repentance, such as Ahab's humiliation, like marble sweating tears in moist and rainy weather without any mollifying of the natural hardness, or Judas his sorrow, raised by the fire in his conscience, not like Peter's, by the spiritual influence of his Master. There is a 'lively hope,' 1 Peter i. 3, which supposeth a dead hope; there is a 'lively stone,' 1 Peter iii. 5, which implies that there are lifeless stones, that are not inwardly fitted and prepared for the spiritual building. The building upon the rock and the sand might have the same beauty, form, and ornaments, but not the same foundation; one was stable and the other tottering. There is a 'repentance towards God,' Acts xx. 21, when the dishonour of God afflicts us, which implies there is a repentance towards ourselves, when the danger of our own persons starts a pretended sorrow for sin. There is a faith that is sound and lasting, a faith that is temporary and perishing, a faith that starts up like a mushroom in a night, and withers at the next scorching temptation. There is a faith common with devils, and a faith proper to Christians; there is a faith of Christ and a faith *in* Christ.

(3.) Because every man is in a state of grace or nature. There is a state

of grace, Rom. v. 1, a state of wrath, Eph. ii. 3. The world is made up of receivers of Christ or rejecters of him, true subjects to God or rebels against him. There are two families, the family of God and the family of the devil. The visible church was not without its distinction. The ark contains unclean as well as clean beasts. There is a Cain in Adam's family, a Ham in Noah's ark, an Ishmael in Abraham's house, and a Judas in our Saviour's retinue; and at the last day the whole world will be distinguished into two only kinds, of sheep and goats. It is necessary therefore to inquire whose we are, whether we belong to the God of heaven or the god of this world; whether we have the renewed image of God, or still retain the old stamp of the devil.

2. It is a duty that requires diligence and care. That which is of infinite consequence in the state of your souls, ought not to be built upon sandy and slight foundations. It is called communing with a man's own heart, Ps. iv. 4, not a slight glance and away; sweeping and looking with a candle, Luke xv. 8, wherewith every cranny and chink is pried into; trying of the reins, which are parts of the body hidden with fat. There must be a careful removing of several things to come at them; a searching for some precious filings of gold in a heap of dust; an employing all the faculties of the soul in a diligent search: Ps. lxxvii. 6, 'My spirit made diligent search.' It is expressed by counting, Ps. cxix. 59, 'I thought on my ways,' *השבתי*; he looked over the acts of his soul one by one. The heart is called the 'inward parts' or depths 'of the belly,' Prov. xx. 7. As the bowels are folded together in many coats and coverings, that they are not easily come to, so the heart of man is full of devices.

(1.) Diligence is requisite, because the work is difficult. It is no easy matter to be acquainted with ourselves. The soul is not well acquainted with its own features, and preserves not the species of itself. 'We behold our faces in a glass, and soon forget what manner of men we are,' James i. 23, 24. As man is apt to know anything but himself, so it is more easy for him to know anything than himself, as the eye sees everything but itself. There must be diligence to discern the rational workings of our soul, to know whether we truly understand such a thing, or really and firmly will such a good. The judgment of man is corrupted, and misrepresents things like a cracked glass.* We can more easily judge of a bodily than of a spiritual disease, because the understanding which should judge of the state of the soul is sickly and ill-affected itself. Our wills also being so changeable, sometimes set on one thing and sometimes flitting to another, the spiritual workings of them are not so readily discernible. This work is done by a reflex act; and reflex acts, in spirituals as well as naturals, are weakest and more languishing, whereas direct acts are more powerful and vigorous. Where grace is small and corruptions many, it must be hard to discern it, as it is for an eye to discern a small needle, especially if in the dust and rubbish. The roots of sin also lie deep, like Achan's wedge of gold in the earth, not easily to be found without good directions. Lust lies in secret corners; there is a deceitfulness of it, subtle evasions, and specious pretences: consideration is requisite to the discerning of them. External acts discover themselves, but the inward acts of the soul, which are the surest evidences, are not discernible without a diligent inspection. The natural inconstancy and levity of our spirits divert us, and the streams of our corruptions cloud and bemit† us, and control our endeavours in self-examination, that we cannot sometimes any more fixedly behold the motions of grace than we can see the beams of the sun in a black and mourning sky.

(2.) Diligence is requisite, because man is naturally unwilling to this

* Preston.

† Qu. 'bemit'?—Ed.

duty. He would live anywhere but with himself, think of anything but himself, delights most in those things which hinder him from a consideration of his own state. Men are more willing to have their minds rove through all the parts of nature than to busy themselves in self-reflection, would read any book or relation rather than the history of their own heart. We are nearest to ourselves physically, and furthest from our own selves morally. Men whose titles are cracked and unsure are loath to have them tried before the judge, and come under the siftings of conscience. Ever since the fall we run counter to God ; it is the property of the divine nature first to know himself, and then to know other things ; but we are cross, would know any other thing but not ourselves, would read others, and not so much as spell ourselves. We naturally abhor any actions wherein we may be like God, though they are the most proper operations for our souls, and suitable to the nature of them, as reflex acts are. There being in us a contrariety to God and his law, to God and his gospel, there results from thence an unwillingness in us to bring our hearts under the examination of conscience, that power which acts by authority and deputation from God. And when grace doth egg us at any time to the performance of the duty, do not our hearts hang back, and our corruptions check us in it? Satan is no mean instrument in this : he is said to blind the world, that they might not know their state. He hath lost his likeness to God in his primitive happiness, and ever since envies man the recovery of that likeness which is possible to man and impossible to himself, and therefore diverts him from all glances towards it, and endeavours after it, the first step to which is self-reflection.

This unwillingness ariseth,

[1.] From carnal self-love. It is natural to man to think well of himself, and suffer his affections to bemist or bridle his judgment. A biassed person cannot be a just judge. Every man is his own flatterer, and so conceals himself from himself. Very few that are uncomely in body, or deformed in mind, but think themselves as handsome and honest as others. David so loved himself that he saw nothing of his sin, but was fair in his own eyes till Nathan roused him up by telling him, 'Thou art the man.' Every man would be 'right in his own eyes,' Prov. xvi. 2. Every blackamore fancies himself to have a comely colour. This self-love may so far bemist a good man, that he may not believe such an act to be a crime, such an excuse to be a fig leaf, such a mark to be unsound. And this self-love keeps men off from this work, for fear they should behold their own guilt, and their souls be stung with anguish. Men that are bankrupts are loath to cast up their accounts, lest it should appear to them that they are undone. Some are loath to see their ugly faces in a glass. Conscience, awakened by this duty, bites and stings, and men are loath to impair their own ease because they would escape the din of an accuser in their own bosoms ; they turn fugitives from their own hearts, and would rather go to hell in a feather bed than to heaven in a fiery chariot. While man seeks nothing more than himself in a sinful way, he conceals himself and flies furthest from himself in a reflexive way.

[2.] From presumption and security. Some walk as securely as if there were no heaven, and it concerned them not ; others walk as presumptuously as though they were heirs-apparent unto it, and yet have no title. Many will have a false persuasion of their faith and interest in Christ at the last day, Mat. vii. 22, and cry, 'Lord, Lord !' and the foolish virgins will knock as confidently and expect entrance to the feast as well as the wise, will not believe but they have a title to heaven till Christ himself clap the door upon them, and manifest the contrary. Had they raked in their own souls and

been plain dealers with themselves, they could not but have found themselves in a lost condition. Those that thus presume cannot endure to hear of the differences between hypocrisy and sincerity, how far a castaway may go in religion. This was the reason the pharisees were such enemies to Christ, because he raked in their consciences; they could never come near him, but he brought some indictment against them of hypocrisy. As Tertullian called heretics *lucifuga scripturarum*, because they would not be cured of their errors, so are such men also afraid to bring their hearts to the test of the word, because they would not be cured of their false presumptions. As Ahab hated Micaiah, so these their own consciences, because they expect to hear that from them which they think evil, and cannot have such a view of themselves in that glass as they desire to have.

(3.) Diligence is requisite, because man is hardly induced to continue in this work. That self-love which makes them unwilling to enter upon it, renders them unfit to make any progress in it. When we do begin it, how quickly do we faint in it! How soon are our first glances upon ourselves turned to a fixedness upon some slighter object! Every man's heart is like an unruly horse, that will be going out of the way if there be not a resolution to check it in its first starts, and bring things to a judicial trial. The heart itself is so light and fluttering, that it wants the stability of grace to fix it in the trial of grace.

(4.) Diligence is requisite, because we are naturally apt to be deceived and to delude ourselves. Our natural blindness and dimness render us liable to mistake, and our deceitful heart may sing a *requiem* to us while we are fools. We have a subtle enemy that lies in wait for us, who can transform himself into an angel of light, and disguise his serpentine hissings to make them appear like the breathings of the Spirit. If Adam in innocence, who had an ability to discern his methods, was deluded by him, much more may we be deceived by him in a state of corruption, when our hearts naturally have his stamp, and are inclined to take his part and join with him in a self-deceit: 'The heart of man is deceitful,' Jer. xvii. 9. It is the great impostor and cheat of the world, the antichrist within us, the deceiver of our souls, as the great antichrist is called the deceiver of the nations. How apt are we to take upon trust what our heart first speaks! James and John could tell Christ that they were able to drink of his cup, and no question they meant as they spake, Mat. xx. 22; but had it come to a trial, they would not have endured to sip of it; and the issue manifested it: they turned their backs upon him, as well as the other disciples. The Israelites, had they tried themselves by their present resolution, Deut. v. 27, 'All that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee we will hear and do it,' might have subscribed themselves as pious as any in the world; they spake no other than they meant. But God had a further inspection into them than they had into themselves: ver. 9, 'Oh that there were such a heart in them that they would fear me, and keep my commandments always!' Natural conscience is often silenced by a pretence and a show, and a man is naturally apt to make his own corrupt judgment, sometimes also his passion, the standard of good and evil, and not only to frame grace according to his own affections, but a god also: Ps. l. 21, 'Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.' The apostle intimates it in that signal mark of caution, when he presseth a truth to which natural conscience will subscribe, that 'neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor covetous, nor drunkards, shall inherit the kingdom of God;' 1 Cor. v. 9, 'Be not deceived,' saith he: even in these things men may deceive themselves with false hopes, much more in moral righteousness. Many

boast themselves rich in spirituals when they are really poor ; so did Laodicea think herself rich when God gave her another inventory of her estate, that she was ' poor and miserable, and blind and naked,' Rev. iii. 17. There is too much resting in the world upon outward privileges,* and often beggars conceit themselves princes because they dream of sceptres. How many extend their hopes as far as their wishes, and these as far as a fond fancy and imagination !

(5.) Diligence is necessary, because to be deceived in this is the most stinging consideration. To drop into hell when a man takes it for granted that he is in heaven, to dream of a crown on the head when the fetters are upon the feet, will double the anguish. It is better for a rich man to dream that he is a beggar, for when he awakes his fears vanish, than for a beggar to dream that he is rich, for when his dream ends his sorrow begins. The higher the false conceit, the lower do men sink when they fall ; the higher men's expectations of heaven are without ground, the more stinging is their loss of it.† To have vain hopes, till God puts us into the scale and weighs us, will be a miserable disappointment. For a man to deceive himself aggravates this ; as self-murder is accounted a greater sin than the murder of another, because it is against that charity to ourselves which is the copy and rule of charity to another.

(6.) Diligence is necessary, because many have miscarried for want of it. Thousands that have thought themselves in the suburbs of heaven, have been cast down to the depths of hell. If all should be saved that think they shall be saved, the strait way would be that which leads to hell ; for what man is there almost that doth not confidently believe he shall be happy ? How many dream they are going to paradise, and when they awake find themselves in the devil's arms !

II. The use.

1. If this be our duty, to examine ourselves, then the knowledge of our state is possible. If we are to examine ourselves, we may then know ourselves. Reflection and knowledge of self is a prerogative of a rational nature. We know that we have souls by the operations of them.‡ We may know that we have grace by the effects of it, if we be diligent ; as we may know by the beams of the sun that the sun is risen, if we shut not our eyes. Grace chiefly lies in the will, and it discovers itself in actions. The more raised any being is, the more active it is. The being of a God is known by the effects of his power in the world, and the being of faith is known by the operations of it in the heart and life. Though gold and that which is gilt be like in appearance, yet the true nature of each of them may be discerned by the touchstone. Hypocritical grace is like true grace, but it is not the same. Sincerity may be known. If we cast but a glance upon our hearts in any word or action, we may know whether we mean as we speak or do, or whether we have any by-ends in it. The discerning of habitual sincerity is not so easy as the knowledge of an integrity in a particular act ; yet if we keep a due watch over the motions of our hearts and the actions of our lives as they come upon the stage, and consider what their ends are, it will not be so difficult to know ourselves. It is impossible a man's will should steal by him in all the actions it produceth, and a man be ignorant and insensible of it. The spirit and conscience of a man may know such things as are in it, both the habits it hath and particular motives to this or that act : 2 Cor. ii. 11, ' The spirit of a man that is in him knows the things of a man.' If men would be more inward in conversing with their own hearts, they might

* Vaughan, Serm. p. 6, 7

† Miserum est fuisse felicem.

‡ *Cogito ergo sum* is the first principle in the new philosophy.

have an acquaintance with the concerns of their souls, as their sense hath with outward objects. There can be no sufficient reason given why the understanding should not as well know the acts of the soul and will, as the acts of the sense and the motions of the body. We know our particular passions and the exercises of them. There is no man that fears a danger, or loves an amiable object, but he knows his own acts about them, as well as the object of those acts. If a man have faith and love, why should he not be as able to know the acts of faith and love as to know the acts of his particular affections? This is easy, if we did live more with ourselves, and oftener exercise that prerogative of reflection which we have above beasts. It is difficult indeed in regard of our corruption; as the law is said to be weak, not in itself, it was able to answer the end for which God appointed it, and man by the endowments of his creation was able to observe it; but it became weak to make men happy, and man impotent to conform to it, through the flesh, Rom. viii. 3, by the entrance of corruption. It is the same corruption of man which renders this knowledge of himself difficult. He lives too much abroad out of his own soul, and too little within, otherwise there is no doubt but he may know his own will, and the habitual inclination of it.

2. How foolish is the neglect of this duty! How many ramble about the world without acquainting themselves with their own hearts, or considering whether Christ be in them! What advantage can there be in the knowledge of other things, if we know not whether there be any operations of grace in our own souls! How few give themselves the opportunity of a serious retirement! How unreasonable is it to rest satisfied with underground hopes of heaven, to call ourselves citizens of Jerusalem above, and have no copy of our freedom to shew, nor any living witness in us to bear testimony for us! It is against nature to desire to be in any company rather than our own, to endeavour to know everything in the world rather than ourselves, which is the first object of knowledge. Should that reason which God hath given us, more excellent than the nature of beasts, be employed about examining everything but ourselves?

3. Use of exhortation.

It is our highest advantage to know what should become of our souls in eternity. Is it a small thing to be within the verge of the wrath of God? And is not the knowledge of this necessary, if we be in such a case that we may avoid it? Or is it a small thing to be an heir of heaven? Are justification, adoption, acceptance, small privileges; faith, love, repentance, small graces? Is not the knowledge of them necessary, that we may have the comfort of them? May not some convenient space of time be every day spent in this? May I not say, as Christ to his disciples, 'Can you not watch one hour?' Can you not spare one hour for so great and necessary a work? Let us enter therefore into the bosom of our heart, and see whether we have a true faith, such as Abraham's; whether it be such a lively faith that hath freed our souls in part from the mud of our corruptions; whether it be a faith resting upon Christ for salvation, without giving indulgence to the least offence to him? Such a faith that purifies the heart, reforms the life, inflames the soul with a love to God, causing us to rejoice in him, and in any further degree of conformity to him? Whether it engenders in us a serious desire and a suitable endeavour to obey Christ? Such a faith that relies upon his promises without slighting his precepts?

III. I shall, lastly, give you some directions about this duty of self-examination.

1. Acquaint yourselves with those marks that are proper only to a true

Christian. Overlook all those that are common with the hypocrite, such as outward profession, constant attendances, some affections in duties. Let us not judge ourselves by outward acts; a player is not a prince because he acts the part of a prince. But we must judge ourselves by what we are in our retirements, in our hearts. He only is a good man, and doth good, that doth it from a principle of goodness within, and not from fear of laws, or to gain a good opinion in the world. Grace is of that nature, that it cannot possibly have any by-end. As it is the immediate birth of God, so it doth immediately respect God in its actings. In the very nature of it, it aims at God, as to love him, believe in him. The great accusation the devil brings against Job was, that he served not God for nought, that his service was not sincere, that he acted a righteous part for his own ends, and to preserve his worldly prosperity, Job i. 9, 10. But if our ends be right, and our actions in the course of them according to his rule, if our hearts in them respect God's law and his glory, how will the devil's arrows drop down, as shot against a brazen wall! The inward bent and the habitual delight and affection of our hearts, is chiefly to be eyed, whether they are in God or in other things. This was the apostle's way of trial: Rom. vii. 22, 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man;' and what the incitements are to your profession and service, whether they are not bare affections, moveable passions, carnal interests, a good education, a working fancy, &c. Take those marks, which are inconsistent with hypocrisy, 'such as accompany salvation,' Heb. vi. 9, and necessarily infer a truth of grace. Begin at the lowest step of true and sincere grace, inquire not at first into the marks of an high and towering faith, of the eminent degrees of it. This would be to put a giant's suit upon an infant's back, and judge ourselves not men, because the garments fit us not. A small beam will manifest that the sun doth peep out of a cloud; but larger ones, and more spread, evidence that it hath got a full victory. Have a right notion of true grace, and though grace be little, yet you may know it; as if a man hath a true notion of a diamond, though never so small, he can truly say that is a diamond as well as if it were bigger. Though a gracious spirit may not have grace enough to satisfy its desires, yet it may find grace enough to settle its soul. There may be grace enough to give a man an interest in Christ, though there be not a full strength to answer all the obligations of the gospel. Let us examine, first, the *truth* of grace, and afterwards the *height* of grace. A little of the coarsest gold is more valuable than much of the finest brass. See how the habitual frame and inclination of the heart stands. A heart set upon heaven discovers the treasures of the heart to be there. See whether we have David's temper, to 'hate every false way,' or Paul's, to 'have a conscience void of offence towards God' in regard of his service, as well as towards man in regard of his converse; not to neglect anything towards God that conscience tells us is our duty to him. One sound and undeniable mark is better than a thousand disputable ones.

2. Let us make the word of God only our rule in trials. This is the only impartial friend we can stick to, and therefore it ought to be made our main counsellor. The word is the principle whereby grace is wrought, and it is the medium whereby grace is known.* The word is that whereby we must judge of doctrine, 'to the law and to the testimony.' If an angel from heaven speaks any other thing than what God hath delivered, he is not to be heard. It is also the rule whereby we must judge of graces. If conscience speak anything for a man's comfort, that is not according to the word, it is to be silenced; if conscience presents us with anything as a grace,

* Principium essendi et cognoscendi.

that will not hold water before God, it is to be rejected in that case; bring it to the touch-stone to see if it, be current coin. As we are to try other men's spirits, so our own, by this rule; it is a part of man's sinful ambition to be his own judge, and so to make his own fancy his rule. The Scripture beam is like a sunbeam, it will discover the most inward, and the most minute, thing, Heb. iv. 12; it will reveal the deceitful contrivances and sophistry of the heart. This word must try us at last, it is to be the rule of the last judgment, to salvation or condemnation; let it be the rule of our self-judgment. It is safe for us to take that rule which God himself will take, and take in good part whatsoever the word saith; if it shew us our evil, let us change our course; if it speak good, let us be thankful to God, and give him the rent-charge and tribute due to him for it.

3. Take not the first dictates of conscience. 'He that trusts his own heart is a fool,' Prov. xxviii. 26, *i. e.* without a diligent inquisition, it is not wisdom to do so, 'but he that walks wisely shall be delivered;' he that makes a strict inquiry into it, shall be delivered from its snares and his own fears. It is a searching, examining, proving our hearts, that is required, not taking them at the first word. There may be gold at the top, and dross at the bottom. We are naturally quick of belief of those things we would have and desire; we should be jealous of these hearts which have so often deceived us, as we are of those who have often broken their word. Whatsoever it speaks, suspend your belief of its sentence, till you have well examined the ground and reasons why it gives in such a report; if it tells you, you are in a good state, that you are penitents, believers, have a choice love to God, an eye fixing on the glory of God as your end, bring it to the test, examine why it saith so. We have here to do with the greatest impostor, and in other things we will not give credit to a cheater. Therefore our searching often in Scripture is joined with trying. We must not only search out our graces, but try whether they be of the right stamp, and have the mark of God upon them. Examination and proof must go together in this act, as they do in the text.

4. In all, implore the assistance of the Spirit of God. Natural conscience is not enough in this case, there must be the influence of the Spirit; it is God's interpreter that can only 'shew unto a man his righteousness,' Job xxxiii. 23. The sun must give light, before the glass can reflect the beams. Grace cannot be discerned, if the Spirit obscure and hide itself. In the night, the beautiful colours in a room are by the darkness, as it were, buried from the sight; but when the sun discharges its beams into the chamber, they are enlivened, and affect our sense. There may be graces in the soul which appear not, if the Spirit withdraws his light; but when he displays himself, they will appear in their true lustre. In all our trials of ourselves, let us beg of God to try us. When David had been ransacking his heart, he would not rest in his own endeavours, but begs of God to open his heart more fully to his knowledge, and bless him with a perfect discovery of it: Ps. cxxxix. 21-23, 'Do not I hate them which hate thee? I hate them with a perfect hatred.' I think, I conclude I do; but lest my conclusions may be wrong, do thou, O God, 'search me and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts,' *i. e.* make my heart and thoughts, and bent of them, visible and fully discernible to me.

5. Let us take heed that, while we examine our graces and find them, our hearts be not carried out to a resting upon them. We may draw some comfort from them, but must check the least inclination of founding our justification upon them. Graces are signs, not causes, of justification. Christ's righteousness only is our wedding-garment, our graces are but as the fringes

of it. Liberty is a sign the malefactor is pardoned, but it is not the cause of his pardon, but the king's merciful grant. God is a jealous God, and is likely there to withdraw his hand, where the glory of his works shall be attributed to anything below him, and his gifts made equal with his Son; and therefore as one saith,* in our trials of ourselves we should do as men with a pair of compasses, fix one foot in the centre while they move the other about the circumference; so let our souls rest in Christ, and hold him with one hand, while with the other we turn over the leaves of our hearts, and be inquisitive after our evidences. Our justification is not by any inherent grace, but our justification is known to us by the grace we find in ourselves.

6. In case we find ourselves not in such a condition as we desire, let us exercise direct acts of faith. Let us not deject ourselves, and make so bad a conclusion as Peter did, and say to Christ, 'Lord, depart from me, for I am a sinful man;' but let us cast ourselves upon the truth and faithfulness of God in the promise of life in Christ. Lay hold on the promise of life, as if you had not laid hold of it before. When comfort is not fetched in by reflex acts, let faith be exercised in direct acts; when there is darkness and no light, 'trusting in the name of the Lord,' and 'staying upon God,' is the proper business of the soul, Isa. l. 10; we should then drink of the waters of life, groan under our sin, and go to a Saviour; 'forget,' as Paul, 'the things that are behind, and press forward to the things which are before,' Philip. iii. 13, 14. We naturally would believe God upon his deed, and trust in him, because we find something wrought in our own souls; God therefore sometimes hides a man's own graces from him, to draw out the soul in acts of faith, which indeed gives the most glory to God. God will be believed upon his word, and God turns it often to the great advantage of the soul, and puts it upon the exercise of faith, when he denies it the comfortable sight of faith. In this case we should make use of such Scriptures which may foment and nourish faith, and put us upon the casting out that filth and mud in our souls which we discerned. When we can find no grace to present Christ with, we should fetch grace from him. A city of refuge is for a malefactor, a physician for the sick, and a Christ for those that groan under the burden of sin; a Christ lifted up and dying, for those that are stung by the serpent.

To conclude. Let us be frequent in this work. Let us not neglect a privilege God hath invested us with above other creatures below us. There is nothing can reflect upon itself, inquire into the nature of its own being, but man; and shall we only resemble the beasts, to see those things which are without us, and not turn our eyes inward, and see what workmanship of God there is in our souls, and what conformity there is between us and our Creator, between us and our Redeemer? Shall we put such an affront upon ourselves, as to banish the noblest part of our souls from its proper operation? A frequent examination of ourselves would ballast our life, keep faith and repentance fresh and vigorous. Let us take heed of a spiritual laziness, and saying, 'There is a lion in the way;' let us remember it is necessary, and though it be difficult, it is not so in itself, but by reason of our averseness to it. The difficulty may be cured by diligence; the necessity of it, and the advantages of it, should both inflame our desires to it, and increase our pains in it. Certainly there can be no more dreadful sign of no grace at all than a neglect of trial whether we have grace or no. If we examine not ourselves, prove not ourselves whether we be in the faith, we are reprobates, *i. e.* unsound, insincere, not in a state of true Christianity.

* Dr Manton.

A DISCOURSE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.—1 COR. II. 2.

THE church of Corinth, to which the apostle directs this epistle, was a church as flourishing in gifts as any, yet as much crumbled into divisions as eminent in knowledge. A year and six months the apostle had been conversant among them, planting and watering with expectation of a plentiful harvest ; but no sooner had he turned his back, but the devil steps in and sows his tares. It was a church still, but divided ; it had the evangelical doctrine, but too much choked with schismatical weeds.

1. Observe, The best churches are like the moon, not without their spots. The purest times had their imperfections ; a pure state is not allowed to this, but reserved for another world.

2. Church antiquity is a very unsafe rule. Other churches, at some distance from the apostles, were as subject to error as this. Pride and ambition were less like to keep out of them than out of Christ's family. Had the history of this church's practices and tenets, without this corrective epistle of the apostle, been transmitted to after ages, they would have been used as a pattern ; not the church, but Scripture authority is to be followed. Fathers must not be preferred before apostles ; church practices are no patterns, but as they are parallel to the grand and unerring rule.

The apostle, laying to heart the rents, draws up the whole doctrine he had before preached unto them into a short *epitome*, but first declares the manner of his first carriage among them, ver. 1. He came not to them 'with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto them the testimony of God.'

To come with man's wisdom,

1. Would detract from the strength and excellency of the word, which, as the sun, shines best with its own beams. The Spirit's eloquence is most piercing and demonstrative, and quickly convinceth a man by its own evidence. Carnal wisdom charms the ear, but this strikes the heart.

2. It detracts from the glory of God, who is more honoured by the simplicity of the gospel than luxuriations of wit. It was his honour, by the doctrine of a crucified Saviour, to nonplus the wisdom of the world ; and the glory of his wisdom, as well as strength, to confound, by impotent and weak

men, the power of Satan, which so long had possessed the hearts of the Corinthians.

8. It would be an argument of hypocrisy to use any other arguments than divine. Men in this would but seek themselves, not God's glory. It would be pride to think that their fancies could be more prevalent than evangelical reason; and therefore the apostle would do nothing but endeavour to set out Christ in his own colours, as he hung upon the cross, that their souls might be captivated to the obedience of a crucified Lord.

I determined, Οὐ γὰρ ἔκρινα. I judged it most convenient for me, most profitable for you. It was a resolution taken up deliberately. It was not for want of the knowledge of those principles which are cried up in the world for true wisdom. I understand them as well as others; but what things I counted gain before, I now count loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and think it not worth the while and pains to make much inquiry about them.

To know nothing, to believe nothing, to approve of nothing, to make known nothing.

(1.) Not your traditions, which have for themselves the plea of a venerable antiquity, and have been handed to you from your ancestors. What I chiefly determine to know is as ancient as the oldest of those mysteries you so much admire, even 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.'

(2.) Not your philosophical wisdom, so much admired by you and the rest of the world. I come not to teach you a doctrine from Athens, but from Jerusalem, and not so much from Jerusalem, as from heaven. I come to declare him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

(3.) Not your poets, wherein the chief mysteries of your religion are couched. I come to teach him to you which your sybils and their prophetic writings pointed at long ago.

(4.) Not your mysterious oracles, which had so long deluded the world; but I come to declare him by whose death they were silenced.

But Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Christ in the deity and glory of his person; but also as crucified, in the ignominy of his passion, and the advantages of his office.

This is the sum of the gospel, and contains all the riches of it. Paul was so much taken with Christ, that nothing sweeter than Jesus could drop from his lips and pen. It is observed, that he hath the word *Jesus* five hundred times in his epistles.

Others understand it thus: I will know nothing but Jesus Christ, though he were crucified; I will boast of him whom others despise.

Among you. You Corinthians, though learned, though rich, I would not know anything else among you than Christ, who is the wisdom of God and the treasures of God.

Observe,

1. All human wisdom must be denied when it comes in competition with the doctrine of Christ.

2. Christ and his death is the choicest subject for the wisest ear.

3. As all Christ, so especially his death is the object of faith.

4. As all of Christ, so more especially his death, in all the mysteries of it, ought to be the main subject of a Christian's study and knowledge.

Doct. For the last, as all of Christ, so more especially his death, in all the mysteries of it, ought to be the principal subject of a Christian's study and knowledge. This is the honour of the gospel, and therefore the preaching of the gospel is called the 'preaching of the cross,' 1 Cor. i. 18. Which should be considered by us,

I. In the first spring.

II. In the person suffering.

III. In the fruits of it.

I. In the first spring. His death was ordered by God.

Peter, as the president of the apostles, delivers it as the sense of the whole college of apostles then present : Acts ii. 23, 'He was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.' It was decreed and enacted in heaven, resolved before time, though done in the fulness of time. Therefore Christ is called 'the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world,' *determinately*, in the counsel and decree of God ; *promissorially*, in the promise and word of God passed to Adam after the fall ; *typically*, in sacrifices which were settled immediately upon that promise of redemption ; *efficaciously*, in regard of the merit of it, applied by God to believers before the actual suffering. He was made sin, not by us, not only by himself, and his own will, but by God's ordination : 2 Cor. v. 21, 'He hath made him to be sin for us,' by a divine statute, *i. e.* he was ordained to be put into the state and condition of a sinner in our stead ; not into the practical and experimental state of sin, but the penal state of a sinner ; to be a sacrifice for it, not to be polluted with it. Indeed, had not God appointed it, it had not been meritorious ; for the merit was not absolute for us, but pactional and conditional. It was capable of meriting, because of the worth and dignity of the person ; but not actually meritorious for us, but upon the covenant transacted between the Father and the Son, that it should be performed by him for us, and accepted by the Father for us, and applied by the Spirit to us.

And as it was appointed by God, it was,

1. An act of his sovereignty. Suppose God might have pardoned sin, and recovered man by his own absolute prerogative, had not his word been passed that, in case of man's transgression, he should die the death. As a word created the earth, and cast it into such a beautiful frame and order, so by one word he might have restored man, and set him upon his former stock, and have for ever kept him from falling again, as he did the standing angels from ever sinning. Yet God pitcheth upon this way, and is pleased with no other contrivance but this, and in a way of sovereignty he culls out his Son to be a sacrifice ; and the Son, putting himself into the state of a surety and Redeemer, is said to have a command given him on the part of God as a sovereign : John xiv. 31, 'As the Father hath given me commandment, even so I do ;' and received by him as a subject, John x. 18. And as God owns him as his servant, Isa. xlii. 1, so he 'took upon him the form of a servant,' Philip. ii. 6, *i. e.* the badge and livery of a servant ; and the whole business he came upon, from his first breath to his last gasp, is called the will of God ; and at the upshot he pleads his own obedience, in 'finishing the work given him to do,' as the ground of his expectations, and the glory promised him, John xvii. 2.

2. An act of the choicest love. God, at the creation, beheld man, a goodly frame of his own rearing, adorned with his own image, beautified with his graces, embellished with holiness and righteousness, and furnished with a power to stand ; and afterwards beheld him ungratefully rebelling against his sovereign, invading his rights, and contemning his goodness, forfeiting his own privileges, courting his ruin, and sinking into misery. So blinded is his mind, as not to be able to find out a way for his own recovery ; so perverse is his will, that instead of craving pardon of his judge, he flies from him, and when his flight would not advantage him, he stands upon his own defence, and extenuates his crime ; thus adding one provocation to another, as if he had an ambition to harden the heart of God against him,

and render himself irrecoverably miserable. God so overlooks these, as in immense love and grace to settle a way for man's recovery, without giving any dissatisfaction to his justice, so strongly engaged for the punishment of the offence. And rather than this notorious rebel and prodigious apostate should perish according to his merit, he would transfer the punishment (which he could not remit without a violation of his truth, and an injury to his righteousness) upon a person equal to himself, most beloved by him, his delight from eternity, and infinitely dearer to him than anything in heaven or earth. Herein was the *emphasis* of divine love to us, that 'he sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sin,' 1 John iv. 10. It was love that he would restore man after the fall; there was no more necessity of doing this, than of creating the world. As it added nothing to the happiness of God, so the want of it had detracted nothing from it. There was no more absolute necessity of setting up man again after his breaking, than of a new repair of the world after the destructive deluge. But that he might wind up his love to the highest pitch, he would not only restore man, but rather than let him lie in his deserved misery, would punish his own bowels to secure man from it. It was purely his grace which was the cause that his Son 'tasted death for every man,' Heb. ii. 9.

3. An act of justice. As his love to us proposed it, and Christ, out of his affection to the honour of the Father and our welfare, accepted it, and was willing to undertake for us, and interpose between us and divine wrath, to stand in our stead, and bear our sins, so it was then an act of justice to inflict; for God being the governor of the world, the great lawgiver righteously exacting obedience from his rational creature, upon the transgression of his law becomes a judge, and his rectoral justice demands the punishment due for the transgression to be inflicted upon the offender. To preserve the rights of justice, and to give a contenting answer to the cry of the bowels of mercy, to wipe off, as I may say, the tears of one, and smooth the frowns of the other, God lays our iniquity upon Christ, Isa. liii. 6. Christ takes the punishment upon himself, to bear our sins in his own body on the tree, and becomes responsible for our transgressions. And though he never sinned, nor stood indebted to God in his own person, yet becoming our surety, and being made under the law, putting himself in subjection to the law, and standing in our stead, he put himself also under the obligations of it to punishment. And thus the weight of the whole punishment due to man was laid upon Christ by God as a just judge. That which he could not have from the debtors he might have from the surety, who had put himself under that obligation of payment, and so was bound to undergo all those curses the law might have inflicted upon us; and pursuant to this obligation, God imputed our iniquities to him, and punished them in him.

II. Consider the person suffering.

1. In regard of his dignity. The Son of God became man; the Lord of glory emptied himself. It was the Lord of angels that took upon him the nature of a servant; the Lord of life shed his blood. It was the Son of God that stooped down infinitely below himself into our nature, to be a sacrifice for our redemption; he that was greater than heaven became meaner than a worm.

2. The willingness of his suffering. He being equal with the Father, could not be commanded to undertake this; he willingly consented, and willingly accomplished it. He was not driven, as the legal sacrifices were, to the altar. His enemies were not so desirous to make him a sufferer, as himself was 'straitened' till he was a sufferer, Luke xii. 50. The cup was

as willingly drunk by him as it was tempered by God : and his enemies did not so maliciously ' put him to shame,' as he joyfully endured it, Heb. xii. 2. The desire that the cup might pass from him was the struggles of his human nature ; not an unwillingness in his person, or a repenting of his undertaking this office. It was a natural motion, evidencing the truth of his humanity, and the greatness of what he was to suffer.

3. The greatness of his suffering. His death had all the ingredients of bitterness in it. It was a grievous punishment, because the holiness of God would not have been so manifested in a light one.

(1.) Ignominious. It was a death for slaves and malefactors : for slaves, whose condition rendered them most despicable ; and for malefactors, whose actions had rendered them most abominable. The Lord of heaven endured the punishment of a slave, and was numbered among transgressors. It is called shame, Heb. xii. 2. Each suffering was sharpened with shame ; he was buffeted, spit upon, wounded in his good name, accounted an impostor ; the most odious terms of blasphemer, Beelzebub's agent, &c., were put upon the Son of God.

(2.) Cruel and sharp ; lingering, not sudden ; from his scourging by Pilate to his death was six hours, all that while in much torture ; he suffered from heaven, earth, hell, in his body, in his soul.

(3.) Accursed. As under God's blessing all blessings are included, so under the notion of a curse all punishments are contained : Gal. iii. 13, he was ' made a curse for us.' There must be something more dreadful than a bare outward pain, or bodily punishment ; Christ wanted not courage to support that, as well as the most valiant martyr ; he bore the beginnings of it till he saw a black cloud between his Father and himself. This made him cry out, ' My God, my God,' &c. The agonies of Christ were more than the sufferings of all the martyrs, and all men in the world, since God laid upon him the sins of the whole world.

III. Consider the fruits of this death, which will render it worth our study.

1. The appeasing the wrath of God for us. God was willing to be appeased (hence the sending of Christ is everywhere in Scripture ascribed to the love and grace of God), but his justice was not actually appeased till the death of Christ. As a merciful God, he pitied us ; but as a holy God, he could not but hate our transgression ; as a God of truth, he could not but fulfil his own threatening ; as a God of justice, he must avenge himself for the offence against him. He gave Christ as a God of mercy, and required satisfaction as a God of justice. He ' set him forth as a propitiation, that he might be just,' Rom. iii. 25, 26. His mercy rendered him placable, but his righteousness hindered the actual placation. He had a kindness for man, but could not have a kindness for his sin ; he had bowels for his creature to free him, but no bowels for his transgression to let that go unpunished. That justice whereby he can no more absolve the guilty than condemn the innocent, was an obstacle to the full issues of his mercy. But when an offering for sin was made by an infinite person, and our near kinsman, who had a right of redemption, there was no plea in justice against it, since the sacrifice was complete ; no plea in divine veracity, since the penalty was suffered ; no plea in divine holiness, since that was infinitely manifested ; no bar to mercy to come smiling upon the world. The wrath of God was appeased upon the death of the Redeemer, and this reconciliation is actually applied upon the acceptance of the believer. If God had not been placable, he had never accepted a substitute ; and if he had not been appeased, he had never raised this substitute after his passion, nor ever held out his hand of grace to invite us to be reconciled to him. There is nothing now remains to be done but

our consenting to those terms upon which he offers us the actual enjoyment of it. This crucified Redeemer only was able to effect this work. He was an infinite person, consisting of a divine and human nature; the union of the one gave value to the suffering of the other. The word of God was passed in his threatening; his justice would demand its right of his veracity; a sacrifice there must be to repair the honour of God by bearing the penalty of the law, which could not be done by the strength and holiness of any creature. All the created force in the earth, and the strongest force of the angelical nature, were too feeble for so great a task. Justice must have satisfaction; the sinner could not give it without suffering eternal punishment. He then puts himself into our place to free us from the arrest of justice, and bear these strokes which, by virtue of the law, wrath had prepared for us. The dignity of his person puts a value upon his punishment, and renders it acceptable for us, it being a death superior in virtue to the death of worlds; it was a death which justice required, and at the sight of it justice was so calmed, that the sharp revenging sword drops out of its hand. God hath smelt in it so sweet a savour that hath fully pleased him. He can now pardon the sins of believers with the glory of his righteousness, as well as of his grace. He can legally justify a repenting sinner. God hath been served in the passion of the Redeemer, his justice and holiness were glorified and the law accomplished, the honour of God is saved, and the author of the law righted, the justice of God sweetened. By this propitiation for sin, God is rendered propitious to guilty man, and stretcheth out his arms of love, instead of brandishing his sword of vengeance. The ancient believers lived in the expectation of this, but they beheld not the consummation of it: they thirsted for it, but were not satisfied with it till the fulness of time. It solely depended upon the passion of Christ; it is by the cross that God is reconciled and all enmity slain, Eph. ii. 14. He was then wounded for our iniquities, and being cast into the furnace of divine wrath, quenched the flames; as Jonah, the type, being cast into the raging sea, quelled the storm. He bore our sins by bearing the wrath due to them, and satisfied justice by suffering its strokes. It could not stand with that justice to punish him, if he were not placed in our stead to be the mark and butt of that justice for us and our sins. Doth not then a crucified Christ deserve to be known and studied by every one of us, who hath done that upon the cross which the holy law, sacrifices divinely instituted, the blessed angels, the purity and strength of universal nature, had never been able to effect? He hath expiated our sins, and by his blood hath secured us from the sword of divine vengeance, if we refuse not the atonement he hath made.

2. Silencing the law. Christ crucified, by satisfying the justice of God, brake the thunders of the law, and dissolved the frame of all its anathemas: 'Being made a curse for us, he hath redeemed us from the curse of the law,' Gal. iii. 13, *i. e.* from the sentence of the lawgiver, denounced in his law against the transgressors of it; so that 'now there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,' Rom. viii. 1, because they are 'dead to the law by the body of Christ,' Rom. vii. 4. By the body of Christ as slain and raised again: for this 'handwriting of ordinances, which was contrary to us, is taken out of the way by God, being nailed to his cross,' Col. ii. 14. He hath abolished the obligation of the moral law, as to any condemning power, it being the custom to cancel bonds anciently by piercing the writing with a nail. The ceremonial law was abolished in every regard, since the substance of it was come, and that which it tended to was accomplished; and so one* understands ver. 15, 'Having spoiled principalities and

* Pearson on the Creed, p. 424.

powers, he made a show of them openly,' of the ceremonies of the law, called principalities and powers in regard of the divine authority whereby they were instituted. These he spoiled; the word ἀπεκδυόμενος signifies *unclothing*, or *unstripping*; he unveiled them, and shewed them to be misty figures that were accomplished in his own person. The flower falls when the fruit comes to appear; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, grace to obey the precepts, and truth to take away the types. But it is also meant of the condemning power of the moral law, which was nulled by the death of Christ, who, upon his cross sealing another covenant, repealed the former. The settling a new covenant implies the dissolution of the old. That was nailed to his cross which was contrary to us, a law that was a charge against us, and by virtue whereof we were sued; and this was the law as sentencing us to death, which was pierced and torn by those nails, that did discover that debt and denounce the sentence, which cannot be meant so properly of the ceremonial as the moral law. The ceremonial law of sacrifices was the gospel in shadows, and appointed for the relief of men, and as a ground whereon to exercise their faith till the appearance of the substance, and therefore cannot be said to be contrary to us, but an amicable discovery, that we are to have that relief in another which we wanted in ourselves; and that we were to be freed from the sentence of death by some grand sacrifice represented by those sacrifices of animals. Besides, the apostle writes this as a cordial, issuing out of the blood of Christ to the Gentile Colossians, who never were under the obligations of the ceremonial law, that being appropriated to the Jews. The apostle brings it to back his assertion, that their trespasses were forgiven. This argument had been of no use to the Gentiles, who sinned not against the ceremonial law, but the moral law; and if one only had been cancelled, and not the other, the Jews themselves, whose offences were most against the moral law, had had little or no comfort in having the fewest of their sins forgiven. Our Saviour died by the power and force of the moral law: that brought him to the cross for the fulfilling it in its penalty, as well as he had done in his life by his obedience; and he receiving the full execution of its sentence upon himself on the cross, as a substitute in our place, nulled that sentence as to any force upon those that believe in him. The plea against it is, that it hath already been executed, though not upon our persons, yet upon our surety; so that, being nailed to his cross, the virtue of his cross must cease before the killing power of the law can revive. This crucified Christ, who disarmed the law of its thunders, defaced the obligation of it as a covenant, and, as it were, ground the stones upon which it was writ to powder, is worth our exact knowledge and studious inquiry.

3. Upon this must follow the removal of guilt. If God, the judge of the world, be appeased and satisfied; and the law, upon which our accusation is grounded, and which is the testimony of our debt, be cancelled, the removal of our guilt must necessarily follow. And this forgiveness of sin is the chief and principal part of our redemption, and ascribed to his blood as the procuring cause; Eph. i. 7, 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin.' He bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, there necessarily follows a discharge of every believer from them. The payment made by the surety is a discharge of the principal debtor from the pursuit of the creditor. As he took away the curse from us by being made a curse, so he took away sin from us by being made sin for us. The taking away the sins of the world was the great end of his coming. There had been no need of his assuming our nature, and exposing himself to such miseries for our relief, had we been only in a *simple* misery, for then we might

have been rescued by his strength ; but being in a *sinful* misery, we could not be relieved but by his sacrifice to remove our gullt, as well as by his strength to draw us out of our gulf. Our sin was a bar upon the treasures of divine blessings ; this must be removed before those could be opened for us, and could not righteously be removed by bare power, but by a full payment and satisfaction of the debt. It is a violent oppression to free a creditor from the hands of a debtor by force ; it is righteous only when it is by legal payment. Well, then, Christ was 'made sin for us,' 2 Cor. v. 21, and that in his death upon the cross ; to what end ? that sin might remain in its guilt upon us ? No ; for him to be made sin, and that by God, without respect to the taking away of sin, had been inconsistent with the wisdom and righteousness of God. The justice of God would not permit him to take our debt of another, and yet to charge it upon ourselves. He was therefore 'made sin for us,' that we might 'become the righteousness of God in (or by) him.' He was made sin, that we might be counted without sin, by the imputation of the righteousness of the mediator to us, as if it were our own ; that as he represented our persons, and bore our penalty, we might likewise receive the advantages of his righteousness for the acquittal of our debts, the *sin* of our nature, and the sin of our persons, the removal of the guilt contracted by Adam, and imputed to us, and the guilt contracted by ourselves ; for it is 'of many offences unto justification,' Rom. v. 16. He was the true person, figured by the scape-goat, that took away our sins and carried them into a land of forgetfulness, where none dwells to take notice of them, and censure us to death for the crimes. Is not, then, this crucified Christ worth the knowing, who took such heavy burdens upon his own shoulders, that they might not oppress ours, and suffered as a victim in the place of our guilty persons, to 'obtain an eternal redemption for us' ? Heb. ix. 14. He that gives so great a ransom for us as that of his life and precious blood, rather than we should remain in our chains, deserves the choicest place in our understanding as well as affections. Were it a bare deliverance, it would challenge this ; but he is said not only to deliver us, which speaks power, but to redeem us, which speaks price, and a buying what was passed into the possession of another ; a payment of that which we were never able to pay.

4. Another fruit is the conquest of Satan. The empire the devil exercised over man did not arise from any dignity in his person, or any right he had to him in himself, but it was first founded on sin, and granted to him by the justice of God, and was not the power of a prince, but of an executioner. Had not sin first opened the door, his venom could not have infected us, nor his power have hurt us. He could never have been our accuser without some matter of charge from us ; nor ever have been our executioner, had we not fallen under the hands of divine justice. His power is erected upon our crimes, whereby he becomes the minister of divine vengeance. But a crucified Christ hath bruised the head of this old serpent, and wounded the prince of this world ; he hath displaced him from his power, snatched from him the ground of his indictments, by cancelling the law upon which his accusations are founded ; and despoiled him of his office by satisfying divine justice, which conferred an authority upon him of executing divine vengeance : Rev. xii. 10, 'The accuser of the brethren is cast out,' and 'destroyed him that had the power of death,' and that through his own death, Heb. ii. 14, 15. That the devil had not a total power over Adam after the fall, proceeded from the intervention of this surety, and the absolute credit of his future victory over him ; yet that promise, that the serpent's head should be bruised, did not, through the weakness of their faith, and the

long delay of performance, preserve them from the fear of death; notwithstanding, that they were all their lifetime subject to bondage; for since the devil's empire was reared upon the ruins of men by sin, he could continually object to them that their sins were not expiated, that death remained as a punishment of sin; but the cross of Christ hath disarmed him of this weapon; his grand plea whereby he kept men in servile fear is completely answered. In bruising our Saviour's heel by the death on the cross, he felt a fatal blow on his head; his conqueror got above him out of his reach, without any hope left in him to touch his heel again. The devil's right was legally taken from him by Christ's death on the cross; the foundation of his authority, viz., sin, was taken away. He was 'destroyed,' that is the apostle's expression, not in his person, but in his authority; he was irrecoverably expelled from his dominion, which he had by his false oracles usurped over the world, John xii. 31; and it is by this crucified Christ that we are more than conquerors over him. And should we not know this crucified Christ, who hath weakened the venom of the serpent, broke the force of the tempter, vanquished him on the cross by the merit of his blood, and conquers him in us by the efficacy of his Spirit?

5. Sanctification is another fruit of the cross of Christ. To be delivered from the guilt of sin, that bound us over to punishment, had been a great favour; but it would not have been a perfect favour without being delivered from the venom of sin that had infected our nature. Though God willed man good by a love of good will, yet he could not delight in him with a love of complacency. If the contagion and filth of sin had deformed and sullied our souls as much as before, if our guilt were only removed, we had been freed from punishment, but without restoring the divine image we had not been fit for any converse with God. It was necessary that our souls should be washed, and our faculties put into a state to serve, in some measure, the glory of God and the end of our creation. God would have seemed to deny his own holiness, if he had regarded only the reverence of his justice, by appointing a sacrifice for atonement, and not consulted the honour of the other by renewing his image in the nature of man. But this is purchased by the death of Christ: 'He came by water and blood,' 1 John v. 6; by blood to expiate our sins, and by water to purify our souls, answerable to the Jewish state wherein it was typified, where there were sacrifices for guilt, and washings for filth. These two things come to us by the death of Christ, the remitting our crime, and the removing of our spot. He gave himself that he might save us, Eph. ii. 25, Titus ii. 14; when he came to purchase the blessings we had forfeited, he would not omit this, which was one of the chief. By him the conscience is purged from dead works, from sin which brought death, and being worse than a pollution by a dead body, hindered us from access to God, as that did from an entrance into the temple. He hath broke our chains, as well as blotted out our crime; healed our natures, as well as procured our pardon; purchased our regeneration, as well as remission. It is by his cross that 'the old man,' which had incorporated himself with our souls, 'is crucified,' Rom. vi. 6. By this he gained the power of sending a saving Spirit, which had not entered into our souls had not Christ's blood flowed out of his veins. The effusion of this blood was the cause of the effusion of the Spirit; it was shed upon us through Christ alone. He hath by suffering for sin on the cross rendered a detestable thing, and shewed how dreadful that is, that could not receive its fatal wound without a wound first in the heart of the Son of God. This is the most powerful motive to quicken us to a hatred of sin, and a love of holiness, and his life the most illustrious pattern. But all this had been of

little efficacy to us, had not the water of the Spirit flowed out from the rock when it was struck, to cleanse the filthiness of our souls. This is given upon the account of his death to believers, to purify their hearts from the mud of the world, and to form them to a new life for the honour of God; and it is not denied to those that will ask, and seek, and knock, Luke xi. 13. Had Christ only purchased remission without sanctification, it had not been for the honour of God's holiness, nor would our condition have been elevated, heaven had been no place for defilements or slaves. It was necessary the filth of sin should be removed, the dominion of sin be abolished, that we might as holy persons approach to God, and as free men converse with God. Is not a crucified Christ, then, worth the knowing, that hath not only destroyed Satan our enemy without us, but can destroy sin our enemy within us? As he hath snatched us from punishment by expiating our sins, so he can bring us to communion with God by razing evil habits out of our hearts; without this latter, we are not capable of enjoying a complete benefit by the former.

6. Opening heaven for us. What is this life but a wallowing in a sink, a converse in the dregs of creation, in an earth polluted by the sin of man, wherein we every day behold fresh affronts of God, and find motions in us dishonourable to ourselves? But Christ by his death hath provided a better place than this, yea, a place more glorious than Adam's paradise, which was designed for our habitation by the first creation; a place not only built by the word of God, but cemented and prepared by the blood of Christ. By the law against sin we were to have our bodies reduced to dust, and our souls lie under the sentence of the wrath of God. But our crucified Saviour hath purchased the redemption of our body, to be evidenced by a resurrection, Rom. viii. 23, and a standing security of our souls in a place of bliss, to which believers shall have a real ascent, and in which they shall have a local residence, which is called the purchased possession. As Adam brought in the empire of death, so Christ hath brought in the empire of life: Rom. v. 17, 'Shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ.' He hath not purchased for us a paradisaical life, or restored us to the mutable state wherein Adam was created; he hath not linked us for ever to the earth, and the use of the creatures for our support; he hath purchased for us an eternal life, and prepared for us eternal mansions, not only to have the company of men, or the society of the blessed angels, but to be blessed with the vision of God, to reside in the same place where his glorified person is adored by the happy spirits, to 'live with him,' Rom. vi. 8, a life wherein our understandings shall be freed from mists, and our wills from spots, and our affections from disorder. We lost a paradise by sin, and have gained a heaven by the cross. And should not this crucified Christ be studied, who hath settled the regions above for our reception, and procured an entrance into that place which justice, by reason of our sin, had else made for ever inaccessible to us?

I might mention more, as the establishment of the covenant, access to God, perseverance, and the conquest of the world.

Use 1. Let us be thankful to God for a crucified Redeemer.

There is nothing in heaven or earth such an amazing wonder as this, nothing can vie with it for excellence. All love and thankfulness is due to God, who hath given us his Son, not only to live, but to die for us a death so shameful, a death so accursed, a death so sharp, that we might be repossessed of the happiness we had lost. All love and thankfulness is due to Christ, who did not only pay a small sum for us as our surety, but bowed his soul to death to raise us to life, was numbered among transgressors, that we might have a room among the blessed. Our crimes merited our suffer-

ings, but his own bowels made him a sufferer for us ; for us he sweat those drops of blood, for us he trod the wine-press alone, for us he assuaged the rigour of divine justice, for us, who were not only miserable but offending creatures, and overwhelmed with more sins to be hated than with misery to be pitied. He was crucified for us (by his love) who deserved to die by his power, and laid the highest obligation upon us who had laid the highest dis-obligements upon him. This death is the ground of all our good, whatever we have is a fruit that grew upon the cross. Had he not suffered, we had been rejected for ever from the throne of God, salvation had never appeared but by those groans and agonies. By this alone was God pleased, and our souls for ever pleased ; without it he had been for ever displeased with us, we had been odious and abominable in his sight, and could never have seen his face. Nothing is such an evidence of his love as his cross ; the miracles he wrought, and the cures he performed in the time of his life, were nothing to the kindness of his death, wherein he was willing to be accounted worse than a murderer in his punishment, that he might thereby effect our deliverance. If he had given us the riches of this world and a greater, had he given us the honour of angels, and made us barons of heaven, without exposing himself to the cross to accomplish it, it had been a testimony of his affection, but destitute of so endearing an emphasis. The manner of procuring is more than a bare kindness in bestowing it ; he testified his resolution not only to give us glory, but to give it us whatsoever it should cost him, and would stick at nothing rather than we should want it. The angels in heaven, in their glistering lustre, are the monuments of his liberality, but not of so supreme an affection as is engraven on the body of his cross.

2. Let us delight in the knowledge of Christ crucified, and be often in the thoughts and study of him. Study Christ, not only as living, but dying ; not as breathing in our air, but suffering in our stead ; know him as a victim, which is the way to know him as a conqueror. Christ as crucified is the great object of faith. All the passages of his life, from his nativity to his death, are passed over in the creed without reciting, because, though they are things to be believed, yet the belief of them is not sufficient without the belief of the cross : in that alone was our redemption wrought. Had he only lived, he had not been a Saviour. If our faith stop in his life, and do not fasten upon his blood, it will not be a justifying faith. His miracles, which prepared the world for his doctrine, his holiness, which fitted himself for his suffering, had been insufficient for us without the addition of the cross ; without this, we had been under the demerit of our crimes, the venom of our natures, the slavery of our sins, and the tyranny of the devil ; without this, we should for ever have had God for our enemy, and Satan for our executioner ; without this, we had lain groaning under the punishment of our transgressions, and despaired of any smile from heaven. It was this death which as a sacrifice appeased God, and as a price redeemed us ; nothing is so strong to encourage us, nothing so powerful to purify us ; how can we be without thinking of it ! The world we live in had fallen upon our heads, had it not been upheld by the pillar of the cross, had not Christ stepped in and promised a satisfaction for the sin of man. By this all things consist ; not a blessing we enjoy but may put us in mind of it ; they were all forfeited by our sins, but merited by his precious blood. If we study it well, we shall be sensible how God hated sin and loved a world ; how much he would part with to restore a fallen creature. He shewed an irresistible love to us, not to be overcome by a love to his own bowels.

(1.) This will keep up life in our repentance. We cannot look upon Christ crucified for us, for our guilt, and consider that we had deserved all that he

suffered, and that he suffered not by our entreaty, nor by any obligation from us, but merely from his own love, but the meditation of this must needs melt us into sorrow. Should we not bleed as often as we seriously thought of Christ's bleeding for us? You cannot see a malefactor led to execution for a notorious crime, but you have some detesting thoughts of the fact, as well as some motions of pity to the person. A strong meditation on Christ will excite compassions for his sufferings, but a detestation of our sins and selves as the cause of it. It is a 'look upon Christ pierced' that pierceth the soul, Zech. xii. 10. Would not this blood acquaint us that the malignity of sin was so great, that it could not be blotted out by the blood of the whole creation! Would it not astonish us that none had strength enough to match it, but one equal with God! Would not such an astonishment break out into penitent reflections! Would not the thoughts of this make us emulate the veil of the temple, and be ashamed that it should outstrip us in rending, while our hearts remain unbroken! Should we not be confounded, that a lifeless earth should shake in the time of his sufferings, while our reasonable souls stand immoveable! Could any of the Israelites, that understood the nature and intent of sacrifices, be without some penitent motions, while they saw the innocent victim slain for their sin, not for any fault of its own; and should we be unmelted, if we considered the cross, the punishment of our crimes, not any of his!

(2.) It would spirit our faith, when we shall see his blood confirming an everlasting covenant, wherein God promises to be gracious. All the promises centred in the cross, received their life from his death, and are from thence reflected on us. Where can faith find a vigour but in the royalties of mercy, displayed in the satisfaction of justice? Where can it find a life but in the views of its proper object? When we behold a Christ crucified, how can we distrust God, that hath in that, as a plain tablet, writ this language, that he will spare nothing for us, since he hath not spared the best he had. What greater assurance can he give? Where is there anything in heaven or earth that can be a greater pledge of his affection?

(3.) This will animate us in our approaches to God. Not only a bare coming, but a boldness and confidence in coming to God, was purchased by a crucified Christ, Heb. x. 19. God was before averse from man, and man unwilling to approach to God. Now God invites, and man may come; man calls and God answers. What can be more encouraging than to consider, that 'by his blood he hath made us kings and priests to God,' Rev. v. 9, 10, to offer up sacrifices with a royal spirit, since the curse which should have fallen upon our heads has been borne by him. We should think of it every time we go to God in prayer; it was by this death the throne of God was opened. This will chase away that fear that disarms us of our vigour. It will compose our souls to offer up delightful petitions. It is in this only we see the face of God appeased toward us.

(4.) This will be a means to further us in a progress in holiness. An affection to sin, which cost the Redeemer of the world so dear, would be inconsistent with a sound knowledge and serious study of a crucified Saviour. We should see no charms in sin, which may not be overcome by that ravishing love which bubbles up in every drop of the Redeemer's blood. Can we, with lively thoughts of this, sin against so much tenderness, compassion, grace, and the other perfections of God, which sound so loud in our ears from the cross of Jesus? Shall we consider him hanging there to deliver us from hell, and yet retain any spirit to walk in the way which leads thereto? Shall we consider him upon the cross, unlocking the gates of heaven, and yet turn our backs upon that place he was so desirous to purchase for us, and

give us the possession of? Shall we see him groaning in our place and stead, and dare to tell him by our unworthy carriage that we regard him not, and that he might have spared his pains? It must be a miserable soul, worse than brutish, that can walk on in ways of enmity, with a sense of a crucified Christ in his mind. Could we then affect that sin which appears so horrible in the doctrine of the cross? Can we take any pleasure in that which procured so much pain to our best friend? Can we love that which hath brought a curse, better than him who bore the curse for us? For want of this study of Christ crucified, we walk on in sin, as if he suffered to purchase a license for it, rather than the destruction of it. The due consideration of this death would incline our wills to new desires and resolutions. It would stifle that luxury, ambition, worldliness, which harass our souls. We should not dare to rush into any iniquity through the wounds of Christ; we should not, under a sense of his dying groans, cherish that for which he suffered; we should not do the works of darkness under the effusions of his blood, if we did in a serious posture set ourselves at the feet of his cross.

(5.) This will be the foundation of all comfort. What comfort can be wanting, when we look upon Christ crucified as our surety, and look upon ourselves as crucified in him; when we can consider our sins as punished in him, and ourselves accepted by virtue of his cross? It was not an angel which was crucified for us, but the Son of God; one of an equal dignity with the Father; one that shed blood enough to blot out the demerit of our crimes, were they more than could be numbered by all the angels of heaven, if all were made known to them. He was not crucified for a few, but for all sorts of offences. When we shall see judgments in the world, what comfort can we take without a knowledge and sense of a crucified Christ! What a horror it is for a condemned man to see the preparation of gibbets, halters, and executioners! But when he shall see a propitiation made for him, the anger of the prince atoned, the law some other way satisfied, and his condemnation changed into remission; all his former terrors vanish, and a sweet and pleasing calm possesseth him. With this knowledge and sense we should not be much terrified at the approaches of death in our last gasps, when we consider itself gasping under the weight of the cross. The blood of Christ is as a balsam dropped upon the points of the arrows of death. That, by removing the guilt of sin, pulled out the sting of death. When we tremble under a sense of our sins, the terrors of the judge and the curses of the law, let us look upon a crucified Christ, the remedy of all our miseries. His cross hath procured a crown, his passion hath expiated our transgression. His death hath disarmed the law, his blood hath washed a believer's soul. This death is the destruction of our enemies, the spring of our happiness, the eternal testimony of divine love. We have good reason, as well as the apostle, to determine with ourselves, 'to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and especially him crucified.'

A DISCOURSE OF CHRIST OUR PASSOVER.

For Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.—1 Cor. V. 7.

THE words are a reason of the apostle's exhortation to the Corinthians to cast out the incestuous person, in regard of the contagion which might be by so ill an example dispersed to others, as a leaven spreads its vapours through the whole lump: ver. 6, 'Know you not, that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?' And having used this similitude of leaven, he pursues it in allusion to the custom of the Jews before the celebration of the passover, according to the command to have no leaven found in their houses at that time, upon the penalty of being cut off from the congregation of Israel; and with respect to the true design of that ceremonial injunction, exhorts the Corinthians to 'purge out the old leaven,' viz., that person from their society, lust from their hearts, every member of the old Adam, that they might be a new lump, answering their holy and heavenly calling. The reason of this exhortation is in the words: 'For Christ our passover is sacrificed for us,' and by his death hath taken away the sin of the world.* As the sacrifice of the paschal lamb represented the sacrifice of Christ, so the manner wherein the Israelites celebrated that solemnity with unleavened bread represents the manner wherewith we ought to celebrate the death of the Redeemer of the world. As therefore our true passover, which is the Lord Jesus, hath been sacrificed for us, let us daily celebrate the memory of it in a manner worthy of so great a grace. As, therefore, the Jews abstained from all leaven in the time of the figure, let us not only abstain from, but purge out, all things contrary to God, because for this end Christ was sacrificed for us. As the passover was a type of Christ, so the unleavened bread was a type of Christians, and of their innocence and purity of life.† And that 'because you are unleavened,' *i. e. de jure*, you ought to be so; for that is said in Scripture sometimes to be *de facto* which ought to be, as 'the priest's lips preserve knowledge,' *i. e.* ought to preserve knowledge.‡ 'Εξαθάραξε, purge out, is more emphatical and pressing than a simple purging: purge it out wholly, that nothing may be left in you, that you may be such as a new lump did figuratively signify.

Christ our passover. The institution of this solemn figure is particularly set down Exod. xii. 3-5, &c. It was appointed by God as a memorial, §

* Amyraut in loc; Estius in loc.

† Menoch.

‡ Pareus in loc.

§ Dailié, Serm. sur 1 Cor. v. 7.

both of the Israelites' slavery in Egypt and their deliverance from it. After they had been about two hundred years in that country, God, mindful of his promise, sets upon their delivery; and since all the former miracles had proved unsuccessful for the bending Pharaoh's heart to give the captives liberty to depart, God designs the slaying of the first-born of every Egyptian family, and thereby sending the greatest strength of the nation to another world. Upon this occasion he orders the Israelites, by Moses, to slay the lamb the fourteenth day of the first month (which answers to our March), and sprinkle the posts of their doors with the blood, and feast upon the flesh of it in their several families; and that night the angel comes and mortally strikes every first-born, none escaping but those who observed this command of God, and had sprinkled their door-posts with the blood of the slain lamb; every house besides being made that night a house of mourning. It was an earnest of the Israelites' deliverance, and the Egyptians' calamity.

Obs. 1. God's greatest mercies to his church are attended with the greatest plagues upon their enemies. The salvation of man is the destruction of sin and the devil; the passover was the salvation of Israel and ruin of Egypt.

2. God provides for the security of his people before he lays his wrathful hand upon their adversaries. He provided a Moses to conduct them, an ordinance to comfort and refresh them, before he shoots his arrows into the Egyptians' hearts. God settles this passover as a standing ordinance in the church, a feast throughout their generations, to be kept by an ordinance for ever, Exod. xii. 14; so that it was not only a memorial of a past and temporal deliverance, but the type of a future and spiritual one. As all the sacrifices were types of what was to be performed in the fulness of time in the person of the Messiah, so this was a great and signal type, and had its truth, reality, and efficacy in the death of the Redeemer.

Christ the passover, i. e. the paschal lamb. The lamb was called the passover; the sign for the thing signified by it: 2 Chron. xxxv. 11, 'And they killed the passover,' *i. e.* the lamb; for the passover was properly the angel's passing over Israel, when he was sent as an executioner of God's wrath upon the Egyptians. So Mat. xxvi. 17, 'Where shall we prepare for thee to eat the passover?' *i. e.* the paschal lamb.

Our passover: our paschal lamb. He is called 'God's Lamb,' John i. 29. God's in regard of the author, ours in regard of the end; God's Lamb in regard of designation, ours in regard of acceptance.

Our passover. Not only of the Jews, but of the Gentiles. That was restrained to the Israelitish nation, this extends in the offers of it to all, and belongs to all that are under the new administration of the covenant of grace.

For us, ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν. Not only for our good, but in our stead, to free us from eternal death, to purchase for us eternal life; sacrifices were substituted in the place of the transgressor, and received the stroke of death which his sin had merited. The title of the paschal lamb is given here to Christ, not only in regard of his meekness and innocence, but in regard of his being a sacrifice, whence he is called 'the Lamb slain,' Rev. v. 12; the Lamb that 'redeems us by his blood,' 1 Pet. i. 18. Here we have,

1. A description of Christ in the type, *passover*.

2. The end of his death.

(1.) *Finis cuius*, a sacrifice.

(2.) *Finis cui*, our, for us.

Three doctrines may be observed from the words,

1. Christ is our passover.
2. Christ is a sacrifice.
3. Christ is a sacrifice in our stead.

1. For the first, Christ is our passover. In allusion to this, he is so often called a Lamb, as also in allusion to the lambs offered in the daily sacrifice, but especially in relation to the paschal lamb, which did more fully express both the nature of his sufferings and the design of his office. You do not therefore find him expressed in the New Testament by the name of any of those other animals which were figures of him in the Jewish sacrifices, but only by this of a lamb, as being more significant of the innocence of his person, the meekness of his nature, his sufficiency for his people, than any other.

(1.) The design of the passover was to set forth Christ. All the sacrifices, which were appointed by God as parts of worship, were designed to keep up the acknowledgment of the fall of man, his demerit by sin, and to support his faith in the promised Redeemer; for they being instituted, not before the fall, but probably immediately after the first promise of the seed of the woman, did all refer to that seed promised, whose heel was to be bruised, as to the foundation of their institution; and being unable of themselves to purge the sin of a rational creature, and the spiritual substance of the soul, they must refer to that which was only able to do it: Heb. x. 8, 'Sacrifice and offering, and burnt-offerings, and offering for sin, thou wouldst not, neither hadst pleasure therein; then said I, Lo, I come to do thy will:' the will of God manifested in the first draught and agreement in heaven, and shadowed in all the sacrifices under the law. When sacrifices of themselves were not, nor could be, grateful to God, nor the blood of an animal give a due compensation to an offended God for the sin of man, then said Christ, 'Lo, I come,' as the person represented by those pictures, as the body signified by those shadows. All those institutions not being designed for any other virtue in themselves, but as notices of the intent of God, and the methods he designed for the taking away of sin by the promised seed; that it was to be by blood and death, that this was the agreement between God and the seed so promised; therefore they were in all those doleful spectacles of blood and slaughter to look through that veil to the calamities the promised seed should endure for the taking away of sin, and have a prospect of the heinousness of sin, and the sharpness of the sufferings of the Messiah, in the groans and strugglings of those dying creatures. So the design of this passover was ultimately to represent the Messiah to them, by whose blood they were to have a spiritual deliverance from sin and Satan, as by the blood of the lamb they had a deliverance from the sword of the destroying angel, and afterwards from Pharaoh and the Egyptian pressures. He is therefore called the Lamb of God, as being shadowed by the paschal lamb of the Old Testament. All things under the law were but shadows of things to come, Heb. x. 1. Christ is the real accomplishment of all; he is our mystical, spiritual, heavenly, perfect passover; therefore those words, which are immediately spoken of the paschal lamb, and did immediately respect the passover, Exod. xii. 46, 'Neither shall you break a bone thereof,' and Num. ix. 12, are said to be fulfilled in Christ the antitype, as if they had been immediately pronounced of him when they were spoken of the paschal lamb: John xix. 36, 'For those things were done that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.' And, indeed, if we consider all the circumstances in the institution, they seem not worthy of the wisdom of God, nor are capable of having any reason rendered for them, if they be not referred to some other mystery;

and what can that be but the Redeemer of the world represented thereby? Why should so much care be in the choice and separation of a lamb? * What virtue had the blood of a poor animal to secure the house and the life of the first-born against the sword of a strong and invisible angel? Was the sprinkling of the blood upon the posts a necessary mark for the angel, as though he had not understanding enough to distinguish between the houses and children of the Israelites and Egyptians? Could not God have signified his pleasure to the angel without such a mark, and given him directions for the security of his people? How can we think God should appoint so many ceremonies in it, lay such a charge upon them for the strict observation of them, if he designed it not as a prop to their faith, a ground to expect a higher and spiritual deliverance by the blood of the Messiah, as well as a trial of their obedience, a memorial of their temporal deliverance, and a sign for the direction of the angel in the execution of his commission?

(2.) The believers in that time regarded it as a type of the Messiah: Heb. xi. 28, 'Through faith he,' *i. e.* Moses, 'kept the passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them.' It was an illustrious testimony of Moses his faith to rely upon the promise and good will of God, and keep the passover, when the blood of a lamb seemed so improbable a means of preserving the Israelites from the destroying angel's sword. Yet certainly Moses his faith pierced further, and looked through this shell to the kernel, through this sign to the thing signified by it. Moses could not have 'esteemed the reproach of Christ,' ver. 26, had he not known Christ; and we cannot suppose so illustrious a prophet, that had such an estimation of Christ as to value his reproaches, did terminate his faith upon the outward action and the bare type, but pierced further to the promised seed, as well as Abel in his sacrifice. It is not likely that his faith stuck only in the effusion of the blood of an animal, and did not see the effusion of the blood of the Messiah, whose reproach he had been so willing to bear. It had been too low a faith for so great a man, not to regard the spiritual deliverance promised to be wrought by the bruising the heel of the seed of the woman. Who can think Moses utterly ignorant of the design of that promise? And if not, who can think his faith should terminate in the outward sign, and that the apostle should give such encomiums to a faith of no higher an elevation than that which respected the command of God in that present affair? Moses his faith had been great in former commands; why should the apostle skip them, if he had not designed to shew his faith in the Messiah figured in the passover? The apostle doth not speak of faith in God simply considered in that chapter, but of faith in the mediator, or high priest, which he had discoursed of throughout that book. How could the ancient believers eat the same spiritual food, and drink of the same spiritual rock, which was Christ, without faith in him, and respecting him as the object of faith in that rock and manna, 1 Cor. x. 3, 4. Some of the Jews acknowledge that the Messiah is to come exactly on that day wherein the passover was offered when they fled out of Egypt; † and to redeem Israel the fifteenth day of the month Nisan, which was the day wherein Christ by his death redeemed the world. They came out of Egypt the first month, when the moon was at the full, and in the same month, and the same appearance of the moon, did Christ procure our spiritual liberty by his death.

(3.) The paschal lamb was the fittest to represent Christ. It was a sacri-

* Daillé, Serm. sur 1 Cor. v. 7.

† Eugubin. in Exod. xii., Masius in Josh. v. 10, tells us out of the Talmud that this was the opinion of the ancient Jews.

fice and a feast ; a sacrifice in killing it and sprinkling the blood, a feast in their feeding upon it. It represents Christ as a victim satisfying God, as a feast refreshing us ; he was offered to God for the expiation of our sins, he is offered to us for application to our souls. The apostle mentions one in the text, the other in the verse following, ' therefore let us keep the feast.' A lamb is both clothes and meat ; Christ is clothing to us by his righteousness to cover our nakedness, and food to us by his body and blood to satisfy our appetite, a sacrifice and a feast for us.

The truth of this proposition will appear,

[1.] In the resemblance between the paschal lamb and the Redeemer.

[2.] In the effects or consequents of it.

[1.] In the resemblance between the paschal lamb and the Redeemer.

First, A lamb is a meek creature. It hurts none, is hurt by all ; it hangs not back when it is led to the slaughter, it cries not when it is stuck ; no greater emblem of patience to be found among irrational creatures. To this the prophet likens our Saviour, when he saith, Isa. liii. 7, ' He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.' How strange was his humility in entering into such a life ! How much more stupendous in submitting to such a death, as shameful as his life was miserable ! For the Son of God to be counted the vilest of men, the sovereign of angels to be made lower than his creatures, the Lord of heaven to become a worm of the earth, for a creator to be spurned by his creatures, is an evidence of a meekness not to be paralleled. The soldiers that spat upon him and mocked him met not with a reproachful expression from him. He held his peace at their clamours, offered his back to their scourges, reviled them not when he lay under the greatest violence of their rage, was patient under his sufferings, while he was despised more than any man by the people. His calmness was more stupendous than their rage, and the angels could not but more unexpressibly wonder at the patience of the sufferer than the unmercifulness of the executioners. He was more willing to die than they were to put him to death ; he suffered not by force ; he courted the effusion of his blood when he knew that the hour which his Father had appointed, and man needed, was approaching. Neither the infamy of the cross, nor the sharpness of the punishment, nor the present and foreseen ingratitude of his enemies, could deter him from desiring and effecting man's salvation. He went to it not only as a duty, but an honour, and was content for a while to be the sport of devils, that he might be the spring of salvation to men. And when he was in the furnace of divine wrath, and deserted by his Father, he utters a sensible, but not a murmuring, expostulation ; he received our sins upon his shoulders, to confer his divine benefits upon our hearts ; he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself ; he despised the shame, submitted to the cross ; his own worldly reputation was of no value with him, so he might be a sacrifice for the redemption of forlorn man ; and, in the whole scene, manifested a patience greater than their cruelty. From this paschal lamb typifying the Redeemer, the Jews might have learned not to expect a Messiah wading through the world in blood and slaughter, sheathing his sword in the bowels of his enemies, and flourishing with temporal victories and prosperity ; but one meek, humble, and lowly, suiting the temper of the lamb which represented him in the passover.

Secondly, It was to be ' a lamb without blemish,' Exod. xii. 5. It was to be entire in all its parts, sound, without bruise, scab, or maim ; and the reason why it was separated four days before the killing of it was, that they might have time to understand whether it had any spot or defect in it. So

is the Lamb of God ; he was holy in the production of his nature, as well as in the actions of his life. Though he was of Adam's substance, he was not contained in Adam's seminal virtue ; he was conceived by the Holy Ghost, therefore unblemished in his conception, unspotted in his birth. From the first moment of his conception, he was filled with all supernatural grace according to the capacity of his humanity ; his union with the divine nature secured him against the sinful infirmities of our nature, and made all supernatural perfections due to him, whereby he might be fitted for all holy operations. As he was that holy thing in his birth, Luke i. 35, so he was righteous to the last moment of his life. The law of God was within his heart, signified by the tables of the law laid up in the ark, a type of his human nature, which possessed in a sovereign degree all the habits of the most accomplished righteousness that ever was in the world ; to which Peter alludes, 1 Peter i. 19, ' a lamb without blemish and spot,' a divine idea of all virtue, who infinitely surpassed all the holiness of men or angels. The apostle multiplies expressions to declare it, and all little enough to express it : Heb. vii. 26, ' Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.' He was like us in our nature, but not in our blemishes ; he had our flesh, but without the least stain of imperfection ; he had the likeness of sinful flesh, but there was not any inherency of sin in him, or adherency of it to him in the assumption of our nature, Heb. iv. 15 ; as the serpent upon the pole had the likeness, but not the venom of the serpent. He was not subjected to our sin, as he was to our natural infirmities ; he had the form of a servant, without the impurities of our slavery, and in all the days of his flesh was not found guilty of one inobservance to God or man. It was necessary he should be so. Had he been obnoxious to sin, he had not been able to take away the sins of the world. No impure person could have made our peace with God, because he could not have made his own peace, nor have procured quietness in his own conscience ; he could not have merited for himself, much less have wrought any righteousness for others.

Thirdly, The lamb was to be chosen and set apart three days, and killed the fourth in the evening, Exod. xii. 6, or ' between the two evenings,' as it is in the Hebrew. Our Saviour was separate from men, manifested himself in the work of his prophetic office three years and upwards, before he was offered up as a sacrifice in the fourth year, after he had been solemnly inaugurated in the exercise of his office. Their keeping the lamb in custody, and tying it at the feet of their beds, that, being in view, it might mind them of their servitude in Egypt, and deliverance from thence by the mighty hand of God, noted the humiliation of Christ before his death, which is called his prison, and therefore the beginning of his exaltation is called a ' taking him from prison and from judgment,' Isa. liii. 8. As the lamb was set apart the tenth day, so some observe* that, in answer to the type, Christ did on the tenth day solemnly and in triumph enter into Jerusalem, and by the same gate through which lambs were led to sacrifice ; and he was crucified that very day and time wherein the paschal lamb was to be slain, between the two evenings, *i. e.* the declining of the sun from noon, which was the first evening, and the setting of it, which was the second ; for it was about the ninth hour, or three in the afternoon, the usual time wherein they killed the passover, that Christ was offered up as a complete sacrifice to God, Mat. xxvii. 46-50. It was ordered by God to be killed in the evening, to signify the sacrifice of the Messiah in the evening of the world. He was crucified at the end of the second age of the world, the age of the law, and the beginning of the third age, that of the gospel, which is called in Scripture

* Gerhard. loc. commun.

‘the last times,’ Heb. i. 2; and ‘the ends of the world,’ 1 Cor. x. 11; which Peter alludes to when he resembles him to the paschal lamb without blemish, 1 Peter i. 19, 20, ‘manifested in these last times for you.’ The death of Christ was in the first evening of the world. The sun is turned; the world shall not last so long after the coming of Christ as it did before; the state of the world is far declined, and the consummation of all things is not far off, since more than sixteen hundred years are past since the first evening began.

Fourthly, The lamb was to be roasted with fire whole, Exod. xii. 4, 8, 9, not sodden; to put them in mind of the hardship they endured in the brick kilns of Egypt, and as a type of the scorching sufferings of the Redeemer, whose ‘strength was dried up like a potsherd,’ and his ‘tongue cleaved to his jaws,’ Ps. xxii. 15, probably alluding to this roasting of the paschal lamb. He bore the wrath of that God who is a consuming fire, without any water, any mitigation or comfort in his torments. It may note also the gradual rising of the suffering of Christ. As his exaltation was not all at one time, but by degrees, so were his sufferings, by outward wounds, cutting reproaches, and inward agonies. The pains of the body are unexpressible in regard of the nervousness, and therefore sensibility of those parts, his hands and feet, which were pierced upon the cross. The consideration of those millions of sins laid upon him could not but be an unexpressible grief to the pure nature of Christ, had there been nothing of the wrath of God mixed with it. But his bodily death and grief was not all, the wrath of God dreadfully flamed out against his soul: there was the principal seat of the sufferings of Christ, because the soul is the principal seat of that sin for which he suffered. What should have been inflicted on us was inflicted on him; but we had not only merited the death of the body, but a death joined with the curse of God tormenting the soul. He tasted death, that death which the devil had the power of, that death which men feared, Heb. ii. 9, 14, 15, which is the weight of that eternal death due to sin. How sharp must that be which had the bitterness of a thousand deaths, for those millions of sins which Christ bore in his body, every one of which had deserved an entire death from the hand of God! How grievous was that death, since he that was more courageous than all the martyrs sweat drops of blood at the approach of the cross, and when he was upon it uttered that terrible complaint, ‘My God, my God,’ &c., words which never came out of the mouth of any of the martyrs in the strength of their torments; so that the sufferings of Christ were of that weight that a mere creature would have sunk under them, not only the holiest man but the highest angel.*

Fifthly, Not a bone of the paschal lamb was to be broken, Exod. xii. 46, which, according to the opinion of some,† signified that kind of death to which the breaking of the bones belonged, and that was crucifixion, it being the custom to break the bones of malefactors, that their punishment might be shortened. This was fulfilled in our Saviour, John xix. 36. Death had not a full power over him, he was not broken to pieces by the greatness of his sufferings, but surmounted his enemies upon the cross, and was reserved entire for a resurrection.

There may be other resemblances noted. As the lamb was to be a male, which implies the perfection and strength of the sacrifice, not above a year old, the sufferings of Christ were in the prime of his age.

[2.] There is a resemblance in the effects or consequents of the passover.

First, The diverting the destroying angel by the sprinkling of the blood

* Daillé, Sermons sur Jean iii. Serm. sur Gal. iii. p. 613.

† Pearson on the Creed, p. 408.

upon the posts, to be a mark to the angel to spare the firstborn of such houses, was the main end expressed in the institution, Exod. xii. 12, 13. Their preservation could not be merited by the blood of an animal. It had a higher cause, the blood of Christ, which was represented by it; to which purpose the observation of Chrysostom is remarkable: As the statues of kings, though they are inanimate things, yet are sanctuaries to preserve those that fly to them, not because they are statues, but because they represent the prince, so the blood of the lamb preserved the families, not because it was blood, but because it represented the blood of the Messiah. This blood quenched that fire of wrath we had merited, turns away that vengeance which would else consume us. By virtue of this sacrifice we 'pass from death to life,' John v. 24. When God shall judge the world, he will pass over those whom he sees sprinkled with the blood of his well-beloved, and turn from them the edge of that consuming sword which shall strike through the hearts of those that are without this blood of sprinkling. It is only under the warrant of this blood that we can be safe. The Redeemer's blood shed for us and sprinkled on us preserves our souls to eternal life. As the destroying sword did not touch the Israelites, so condemning wrath shall not strike those that are under the protection of it; death shall have no power over them. The blood of the paschal lamb wrought a temporal deliverance, and this blood a spiritual and eternal one.

Secondly, Upon this succeeded that liberty God had designed for them, Exod. xii. 31. As it secured them from death, so it was the earnest of their deliverance, and broke the chains of their slavery. The death of Christ is the foundation of the full deliverance of his people, and the earnest of the fruition of the purchased and promised inheritance. This was the conquest of Pharaoh, upon which soon after followed his destruction. Pharaoh's heart was not bent till the celebration of this passover; that which succeeded upon it laid him more flat than all the former plagues whereby he had smarted. The promises concerning the Messiah, and the sacrifices which were types of him, terrified the devil, Pharaoh's antitype; but only the blood of Christ shed conquers him and pulls captives from his chains. The Israelites' slavery ended when their sacrifices were finished; the efficacy of this divine pass-over delivers men from a spiritual captivity, under the yoke of sin and the irons of Satan, instates them in the liberty of the children of God, whereby they become a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a free and peculiar people. This strikes off the shackles, works an escape from the pressures of spiritual enemies, changeth a deplorable captivity into a glorious liberty, and reduceth Satan to so impotent a condition, that all his strength and all his stratagems cannot render him master of that soul that is once freed from his chains; as after this passover the Egyptian strength was so scattered that they were as ready to force that people to their liberty as before they were desirous to detain them their slaves, and were never able to reduce them to their former chains.

Thirdly, After this passover they do not only enjoy their liberty, but begin their march to Canaan, the promised and delightful land. They then turn their backs upon Egypt and their faces towards Canaan, and after a pilgrimage in the desert they enter the land flowing with milk and honey. So by the merit of the sacrifice of Christ the true Israelite turns his face from earth to heaven, from a world that lies in wickedness to an inheritance of the saints in light, and travels towards Canaan, whither he shall be sure to enter after he hath finished his pilgrimage, to feed upon the milk and honey, the glory and happiness proper to that state. Then shall all the ends of this passover be fulfilled and completed in the kingdom of God, Luke xxii. 16, and the soul remain for ever in a glorious state beyond the reach of its former tyrants, free

from all fear of slavery, for ever rejoicing in the happy accomplishment of the promises of God. In short, as after the celebration of this passover in Egypt, all the promises of God to them began to take place and pass into performance, so by the death of Christ, the true passover, all the promises were made *yea and amen* in him, and began to be made good to every believer.

The use.

1. Of information, Is Christ called our passover? Then

(1.) The study of the Old Testament is advantageous. The apostle here writes to the Corinthians, among whom were not only Hellenists but Gentiles, who could not understand the nature and ends of the passover without the knowledge of the Old Testament. By this they are implicitly directed to the study of it. The Old Testament verifies the New, and the New illustrates the Old; the Old shews the promises of God, and the New the performance; what was predicted in the Old is fulfilled in the New. By comparing both together, the wisdom of God in his conduct is cleared, and the truth of God in his word confirmed. The Old Testament delivers the types, the New interprets them; the Old presents them like money in a bag, the New spreads them, and discovers the value of the coin. The Israelites in the Old felt the weight of the ceremonies, believers in the New enjoy the riches of them.

(2.) Upon what a slender thread doth the doctrine of transubstantiation hang. Christ is here called the passover. Was the paschal lamb therefore substantially the body of Christ? Were those lambs that were slain in Egypt, or at any other time, in the celebration of this ordinance, transubstantiated into Christ? Yet Christ is absolutely here called the passover, and in other places the Lamb, as the bread in the sacrament is called his body, or the wine his blood. Christ is said to be the rock of which the Israelites drank, 1 Cor. x. 4; was the rock, or the water that flowed from it, transubstantiated into Christ? But in Scripture the name proper to the thing represented is given to that which represents it. The lamb is called the passover, because it is a memorial of the angel's passing over the Israelites' families; and not only called so at the first institution, but above fifteen hundred years after that miraculous mercy. So the bread and wine are called the body and blood of Christ, because they are memorials and signs of his body and blood. If the church of the Jews spake figuratively in the case of the passover, what difficulty is it that Christ should call the memorials of his body and blood by the name of the things they signified?

(3.) It gives us a probable reason for the change of the Sabbath from the seventh day to the first. That it is changed is evident by apostolical example. It is probable that from the creation the year began in September, the autumnal equinox, the fruits being on the trees at the creation;* but now God orders the beginning of the year from the time of this first passover, and the consequences following upon it, their deliverance from Egypt, which was in March, the vernal equinox: Exod. xii. 2, 'This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you.' Had the year begun from March at the beginning, it had not been so proper to command them to begin it from that month, which they had always observed before as the beginning of the year. The Israelites had been as it were buried in Egypt, and this being the month of their resurrection, should be the first month of the year. This change of the beginning of the year gives us a probable reason of the change of the Sabbath. If the beginning of the year were changed upon the account of the type, a day might well be changed upon the account of the antitype. If this in the figure were counted greater than creation, that the month of the world's

* Lightfoot's Gleanings on Exod. xii. 2.

creation must give place to it, the substance of this figure appearing might well be the cause of the change of a day, and the seventh day of the creation give place to the first day of the perfection of redemption.

(4.) The ancient Jews were under a covenant of grace. Christ was the end, the spirit, the life of their sacrifices. The passover, rock, sacrifices, manna, were the swaddling-bands wherein he was wrapped. They 'ate of the same spiritual meat, drank of the same spiritual drink;' the 'rock which followed them,' cherished them, and watered them, 'was Christ,' 1 Cor. x. 3, 4. Christ to come was set forth to them as an object of faith. Christ was the rock, the passover sacramentally. Their sacraments and ours were the same *in re*, though diverse in signs. Hence their sacraments are attributed to us, circumcision and the passover, spiritually; ours in the same manner to them, baptism and the Lord's Supper, 1 Cor. x. 2, 3. They indeed had Christ, as it were, in his infancy; we in his ripe and full age. They had him under the obscure veils of lambs, bullocks, goats; we have him in his person. They had the sun under a cloud; we the sun at noon-day in his glory.

2. Comfort; in the security Christ procures. The destroying angel was not to enter into any sprinkled house, no passage was afforded to him. The wrath of God, or the malice of the devil, can have no power over them that are sprinkled with the blood of Christ. In the efficacy. The blood of the lamb was but a sign of that deliverance of the Israelites, but could not purge their defiled consciences; but the blood of our Lamb hath merited our salvation, can cleanse our consciences from dead and condemning works to serve the living God, and rejoice in him, who, without this sprinkling, will be to us a consuming fire. As the passover was killed, that he might be their food as well as their security, so was Christ crucified, that he might be our atonement and our nourishment, our shield and our food, to make us partakers of his benefits by a spiritual application, and a close incorporation of us with himself. This comfort is the greater, by how much the tyrant we are delivered from is more dreadful than Pharaoh; whose design is not only, like his, to afflict our bodies, but tumble our souls and bodies into the same hell with himself. It is from the wrath of God our passover hath delivered us; and what is the anger of Pharaoh to the fury of an offended Deity, kindled against us by our multiplied transgressions? It is true, deliverance is yet but begun; it is not yet perfect; miseries and spiritual contests are to be expected. Pharaoh will pursue, but shall not overtake; the sea shall ruin the Egyptians, but secure the Israelites; death shall not swallow up those who are sprinkled with this holy blood. Consider also, if God were so punctual to his word in so light an instance as the blood of the lamb, he will be as steadfast to it in so great an instance as the blood of his Son beheld cleaving to the soul.

3. Exhortation.

(1.) Thankfully remember this passover. A redemption from divine wrath, a spiritual life and liberty, the fruits and purchase of this lamb, are incomparably beyond the temporal deliverance conferred upon the Jews. The giving thanks was a duty annexed to the eating of the paschal lamb, wherein they blessed God for the mercy shewed to their fathers in bringing them out of Egypt.* How infinitely more precious is the blood of the Son of God than the blood of a silly animal! How highly doth the benefit of the one surmount the immediate fruit of the other! And is it not fit our praises should surpass those of the Jews for the old passover? Remember it with bitterness. The Israelites ate the passover with bitter herbs; shall

* Buxtorff's Synag. Jud. cap. xiii.

we be without it when we consider the cause of our slavery, and the means of our deliverance? A bitterness of soul will make the taste of the benefit of Christ more delicious.

(2.) Inquire whether he be our passover. He is our passover, but is he a lamb eaten by us, owned by us? He is ours by the gift of God, but is he ours by the acceptance of our souls? It is the most useful, most necessary inquiry we can make. All the comforts of possessions in the world consists in the word *mine, ours*, and the use as *ours*; all the comfort of spiritual mercy consists in property, possession, and fruition. If he be our Lamb, we must be like him, we must learn of him. As he is the cause of our expiation, he must be the copy of our imitation: Mat. xi. 29, 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly, and you shall find rest unto your souls.' No rest without a sense of sin, and humiliation for it. This Lamb is ours in the liberty, life, glory, and rest he hath purchased, when we are like him, when we learn of him.

(3.) Have faith in the blood of Christ. The killing the lamb signified the death of Christ, the sprinkling the blood signified the application of it by faith. It was not the blood contained in the veins of the lamb, or shed upon the ground, that was the mark of deliverance, but sprinkled upon the posts;* nor is it the blood of Christ circulating in his body, or shed upon the cross, which solely delivers us, but as applied by faith to the heart. That was sprinkled upon every house that desired safety, and this upon every soul that desires happiness. Satan will have an undoubted right over all that are without the token of this blood, as the destroying angel had over every house that was not sprinkled with the blood of the passover. This was the sanctuary of the Israelites, the want of it, the death of the Egyptian first-born, from the prince to the peasant, from him that sat upon the throne to him that was in the dungeon, Exod. xii. 29. Without this blood of sprinkling, neither prince nor beggar can possibly escape; the one's grandeur cannot privilege, nor the other's misery procure a pity. The blood was to be taken and put upon the posts; this condition was requisite. To have a part in the great passover of our Lord, the condition is to 'sprinkle our hearts' by faith with his blood, 1 Pet. i. 2. Had an Israelite's family neglected this, it had felt the edge of the angel's sword; the lamb had not availed him, not by a defect of the sacrifice, but by their own negligence or contempt of the condition. Or had they used any other mark, they had not diverted the stroke; no work, no blood, but the blood and sufferings of the Redeemer, can take away the sin of the world; without it, every man in the world lies in the sin of his nature, under the wrath of God. If anything else in the world had a virtue for it; it could not prevail, unless God would accept it, because he did not appoint it. This only is designed to be our passover; where else can we find any remedy against the stings of our consciences, any ease under the weight of our sins, any consolation against divine wrath?

(4.) Let us leave the service of sin. The Israelites after this passover did no more work at the brick-kilns of Egypt; they ceased to be Pharaoh's slaves, and began to be the Lord's freemen. God intended no more to turn them to their former labour; he would have them eat their passover with their loins girt, in the habit of travellers. We must be in a readiness to leave the confines of Egypt, all commerce with, and service of sin and Satan, and have our faces set towards Canaan, our steps directed to observe his commands for our rule, to attain his promises for our comfort, and go

* Durant *Agneau Paschal*.

forward rejoicing in his goodness, celebrating his name, offering our souls and bodies to him, which is a reasonable service to Christ our passover.

Doct. 2. Christ is a sacrifice, ἑθύθη. The word θύειν properly signifies to kill as a sacrifice.* Some dispute whether the paschal lamb was a sacrifice, because in a sacrifice something was offered to God, either in whole or in part, but the paschal lamb was not offered to God, but eaten by the people; it was killed to the end that the blood should be sprinkled upon the posts of the doors, and therefore it is rather a sacrament than a sacrifice. Again, the Jews did not sacrifice out of the temple, and therefore in their captivities they did not sacrifice, but both then and now they celebrate the passover. Others again think it a sacrifice, because the sprinkling of the blood upon the posts was, in a manner, an offering it to God to turn away his wrath (Exod. xxxiv. 25, 'Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven, neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the passover be left until the morning'), and a means of reconciliation to him: Deut. xvi. 2, 'Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the passover unto the Lord.' But whether properly a sacrifice or no, yet it was significative of the propitiating blood of Christ, the future grand sacrifice, by virtue of which we have our deliverance. The apostle might here allude to the passover and other sacrifices, all which did prefigure the spiritual redemption by the Messiah. A sacrifice is defined to be a religious oblation of something consecrated and dedicated to God, by the ministry of a priest, according to God's institution, to be destroyed, for a testimony of the worship of God and an external symbol.†

I shall lay down some propositions for the illustrating this doctrine.

1. Sacrifices were instituted as types of Christ.

(1.) They were instituted by God. No satisfactory reason can be rendered of the custom of sacrificing, derived from the first age of the world, practised by all nations, till the appearance of the gospel abolished it in those places where it shone. It could not be a dictate of the law of nature inscribed in all men's hearts, for then they would have been of force still. Christianity doth not extinguish any beam of natural light, but adds a clearness to it; it abolisheth only what was corrupt, or only ceremonial. Though natural light could not invent them, yet it made them entertainable by all, while they were stung with the conscience of sin and expectations of vengeance. Men might know that they were unlike to what they were in their creation; they found their light darkened, their beauty defaced, and might suppose that a God of infinite goodness did not send them forth in such a shape out of his mint; this deformity must come upon them for some provocation, and by the means of their own sin. They also found the marks of God's anger upon them, saw and felt his thundering judgments in the world; they had a notion of the vindictive justice of God; they had frequent manifestations of it upon themselves and others. This the apostle affirms generally of the heathens: Rom. i. 32, 'They knew the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death;' they had a sentiment of God and revenging justice in their consciences, that it did not become the holiness and righteousness of the divine nature to let their rebellions remain unpunished. The apostle speaks not there of any supernatural revelation, but the natural manifestation by the creatures, whereby his justice was discovered, as well as his eternal power and Godhead. Upon this account sacrifices were practised among them, as seeming to them congruous means

* θύειν ἱερτεῖα. θύειν θυσιάς. Stephan.

† Cloppenburg. de Sacrificiis, p. 4. Owen against Biddle, p. 479.

for the expiation of sin, and to put a stop to the wrath of God, either feared by them or already kindled among them. For by this action they confessed their desert of death for their crimes, acknowledged God's sovereignty and right over all they had, and owned his mercy in accepting in their stead the life of an irrational animal. For when men are sensible of the anger of God, the next thought in order is how to escape it. When men see a magistrate suffer murders and violences in a nation to go unpunished, they generally have an horror of it, and expect some judgment of God, till an expiation be made by the death of the offender. And could they reasonably think God to be void of that virtue of justice, which is commendable over all the world by the light of nature, when those perfections of human nature, left in the midst of corruption, are but as little sparks to those which are infinite in God? They were at first instituted by God; though we have not the institution of them in express words, yet we have the practice in Abel, Gen. iv. 4; afterwards in Noah, Gen. viii. 20, Noah offered burnt offerings on the altar. And since the apostle, Heb. xi. 4, speaks of Abel's offering a sacrifice in faith, it must be God's command; for no act of worship of a human invention can please God. The demand might be made, Who hath required those things at your hands? It had not been formally good unless offered in faith; nor had it been a fit ground or medium of faith without a divine stamp upon it. If the foundation were not divine, the act could not be acceptable.

(2.) No other reason can be rendered of the institution of them, but as typical of the great sacrifice of the Redeemer. The Scripture gives us the only account of this; all nations in the world without the Scripture are in the dark as to the design of those sacrifices, though they practised them conformably to the sentiments of their consciences. The institution of them from the beginning of the world cannot reasonably be concluded to be for any other end than to prefigure some sufficient sacrifice, able to appease the wrath of God, and pacify the consciences of men, and to instruct men in what was to be brought upon the stage in time, in the exhibition of the person of the Redeemer. In the state of innocence we find no mention of them, nor could they have had any place had man continued in his created rectitude and integrity. The covenant of works, which then was the rule and ground of man's standing, required not faith in a Redeemer, and therefore implied no such act as sacrificing. Man then had no relation to God but as a creature, and persisting in obedience could not by the righteous law of God be subject to death, and therefore no other subjected to death for him; for to have any one to die for us implies that we had merited death ourselves. It cannot enter into the reason of man to imagine what use they could be for in that state. Death was not due to the righteousness of man's nature, but to his corruption. Adam stood upon his own bottom, and was the foundation of all his posterity, and no person was substituted in his room. What could sacrifices then represent? Whereof could they be typical? Could they be for the confession of sin? There was none to confess. Could they be to represent a death deserved? There was no crime committed whereby to merit it. Could it be to typify Christ to come? There was no revelation of him till after the fall, Gen. iii. 15. And supposing (as some do) that Christ should have been incarnate had man persisted in his first integrity, yet none suppose that Christ should have been crucified in that nature without the entrance of sin. What end could be supposed of shedding his blood? For satisfaction of justice? Justice was not provoked. For example? Man, perfect in all virtue, needed none; besides, he was not capable of the exercise of suffering virtues, who was not capable of suffering in that state. They

were appointed therefore after the fall, as the representations of this sacrifice, so necessary for the expiation of sin. And some conclude with probability that they were put in practice immediately after the making the promise of the seed of the woman (though there be no express scripture for it), from Gen. iii. 21, 'God made them coats of skins,' which probably were the skins of slain beasts, very likely consumed by fire from heaven, as the Jews say Abel's sacrifice was, which was a token of God's acceptance of it. This was probably done for the confirmation of the truth of the promise, the clearer representing the design of it to them, by substituting another in the room of the offender, and comforting them thereby, since 'without shedding of blood is no remission,' Heb. ix. 22. And of those sacrifices the skins were appointed to be the garments of the first man and woman, to put them in mind of their apostasy, and the way of their recovery, and the righteousness of another, wherein they were to stand before God. But howsoever it be, we cannot suppose Abel to be the first that offered sacrifice, and that 129 years should run without the offering of any.* It is likely Abel was slain in that year, because Seth was born in the 130th year of Adam's age, Gen. v. 3. Indeed sacrifices, as they looked backward, could be no other than a transcript of the agreement between the Father and the Son, of the one's paying, and the other's accepting the price of blood for the redemption of man;† and as they looked forward, a type of the real performance of the sufferings on the one part, and the acceptance of them on the other part, when the fulness of time should come wherein they were actually to be undergone. This tradition of sacrifices was handed down to all nations of the world, but the knowledge of the end of them was lost. Yet in an exercise of reason they might rise to a consideration, that this low blood could not be a compensation for sin, as not being proportioned to the dignity of him with whom they had to do. But as to the true end of them, the representation of a higher sacrifice, they were not able to discern it by all the reason in the world, after they had lost the revelation of it. By the way, this adds a credit to the Scripture, since it gives us an account of the reason of that which was practised by all nations, which they could not without revelation render any tolerable reason for. The Scripture makes it plain. God would have a representation of that which the Redeemer was to offer in the fulness of time for the abolition of sin. As men always need a satisfaction of the justice of God, so God would have it that in all their worship there should be a mark of this necessity, and some presage that one day there should be a sacrifice eternally efficacious, the reality of which was represented by this figure.‡

(3.) Christ did really answer to these types. They were all Christ in a cloud; the substance did answer to the shadows, and he was used in such a manner as the figures of him were. Christ was a victim put in the place of the sinner to appease the anger of God; and as sins were laid upon the head of the sacrifice, so God 'put upon him the iniquities of us all,' Isa. liii. 6. In regard of this typicalness of the legal administration, Christ is often called a lamb, and 'the Lamb of God,' John i. 29, and 'a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,' not only in the decree, but in the type of him, the first sacrifice mentioned in Scripture, which was a firstling of the flock, Gen. iv. 2, 4, Abel being a keeper of sheep. To those figures of him he seems to refer in his last speech upon the cross, John xix. 30, 'It is finished.' The whole design of the daily and extraordinary sacrifices was

* Cloppenburg. de Sacrific. pp. 12, 13.

† Owen on Hebrews, vol. ii. Exercit., p. 61, much changed.

‡ Amyraut sur Hebr. vii. p. 50.

completed, the demerit of sin and severity of divine justice were manifested, and the truth of God, as well as his love, made glorious therein; upon which followed the rending of the veil, and the setting heaven open for the entrance of all that believed in him, to approach to God upon the account of this sacrifice.

2. The sacrifices thus instituted were of themselves insufficient, and could not expiate sin, they must therefore receive their accomplishment in some other. Being but shadows by their institution, they could make nothing perfect, Heb. x. 1, 11, where, and in the following verses, the apostle lays the glory of the legal sacrifices in the dust; nor really atone, though they typically did, they did but evidence the guilt of sin and misery of men, whence the law is called a minister of death.

(1.) It was not consistent with the honour of God to be contented with the blood of a beast for an expiation of sin. How could there be in it a discovery of the severity of his justice, the purity of his holiness, or the grandeurs of his grace? How would he have been known in his infinite hatred of sin, if he had accepted the blood of an abject animal as an atonement for the sin of a spiritual soul? Was it becoming the majesty of God, who had denounced a curse in the law upon the transgressors of it, and published it with so terrible a solemnity, as thunders, lightnings, earthquakes, which made it pass under the title of a fiery law, Deut. xxxiii. 2, in regard of the severe menaces against the transgressor, to make so light of it, to accept of the mangling a few beasts in the place of the offender against it? Should he appear on mount Sinai with ten thousand of his angels in the giving of it, to let all the threatenings of it vanish into smoke? Was it likely all those curses should be poured out upon a few irrational and innocent creatures, who had never broken that law? Can it be imagined, that after so terrible a proclamation, he should acquiesce in so light a compensation as the death of a poor beast? No man can reasonably have such despicable thoughts of the majesty, justice, and holiness of God, or the vileness of sin and greatness of its provocation, as to imagine that the one could be contented, or the other expiated, by the blood of a lamb or bullock. Our own consciences will tell us that if God will have a sacrifice, it must be proportioned to the majesty of him whom we have offended, and the greatness of the crime we have committed.

(2.) They have no proportion to the sin of man. The sin of a rational creature is too foul to be expiated by the blood of an irrational creature; nor could the blood of a human body, though the first-born, the strength and delight of man, Micah vi. 7, much less of a beast, bear any proportion to the sin of the soul: Heb. x. 4, 'It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin.' The butchery of so poor a creature cannot be any compensation for that which is a disparagement of the Creator of the world. What alliance was there between the nature of a beast and that of a man? An inferior nature can never atone the sin of a nature superior to it. There is indeed in the groans of those dying creatures some demonstration of God's wrath, but no bringing in an everlasting righteousness, nor any vindication of the honour of the law.

(3.) The reiteration of them shews their insufficiency.† Had the wrath of God been appeased by them, why should the fire burn perpetually upon the altar? Why should it be perpetually with the carcasses of beasts? As often as they were offered, a conscience of sin was excited in the presenter of them, iniquity was called to remembrance, Heb. x. 2, 3. The whole scene of that administration loudly published that the wrath against sin was

* Amyraut, des Religions, p 309, 310.

† Jackson, vol. ii. 292.

not appeased, the guilt of the soul not wiped off. If a man had presented a sacrifice for his sin one day, and fallen into the same, or another, before night, he must have repeated his sacrifice for a new expiation; had there been ability in them to perform so great a thing, there had not been a repetition. They were rather a commemoration of sin, and confessions of it, than expiations of any; rather accusers than atoners.

(4.) God had often spoken slightly of them. He resembles them to the 'cutting off a dog's neck,' when done with an unholy heart, Isa. lxvi. 3. While the temple stood, he struck their fingers off from hanging upon them, Isa. i. 11-13; indeed, he would 'not reprove them for their offering,' Ps. l. 8, but he would not have them place their justification in them. He professeth he had no delight in them, Ps. xl. 6. If all sacrifices of the law were not of such value as love to him and fear of him, they could not expiate; and if that which was more excellent than those were too weak to effect it, an utter inability must remain in the other. He doth frequently predict the abolition of them, and hath destroyed the temple to which he had affixed them, which remains in desolation without a sacrifice to this day. Besides, he never provided a typical remedy for all sins in them; some transgressors were to be cut off without a sacrifice for them, according to the judicial law, the rule of the government of that people; upon which account David argues that God did not delight in them: Ps. li. 16, 'Thou desirest not sacrifice, thou delightest not in burnt-offerings,' because he had provided no sacrifices for those sins David at that time was guilty of; whereupon he desires, ver. 18, that God would 'do good to Sion in his good pleasure;' bring forth that Redeemer out of Sion which he had promised, whose sacrifice, being a sacrifice of righteousness, should be infinitely delightful to him. Since, therefore, it is unbecoming the majesty of God to be satisfied with the blood of a calf or goat, since it bears no proportion to the sin of man; since he never intended those institutions to be perpetual; since the threatenings of the law must, if God be a God of truth, have their accomplishment either in the person offending, or in some undertaker for him, capable to bear them in his stead; there must be some other sacrifice suited to the majesty of God, able to make an expiation proportionable to the sin of man, a sacrifice able to remove the guilt and pacify the conscience, a rest for God and a security for the creature. The natural order of things requires, and the whole design of those legal institutions declares, that as he that keeps the law should have a reward from the goodness of God, so he that breaks it should endure a punishment from the justice of God; and every man being a breaker of the law, must either sink under the menaces of it, or present a sufficient sacrifice to God to avert his wrath, a precious blood that may quench the flames of his anger, that God may say to the sinner, 'I have found,' and accepted, 'a ransom' for thee. And what is said of this may be said of all our duties and performances, the staves upon which men naturally lean for acceptance of their persons. They can no more be acceptable in themselves to God, or remedies for man, than the legal sacrifices, which had no merit in themselves, but represented that which was grateful to God and meritorious for the creature; and whatsoever virtue and efficacy they had was not from themselves, but from that which they shadowed.

3. Proposition. Such a sacrifice, therefore, is necessary for a sinful creature. No creature can be such a sacrifice. As the apostle argues, 'If righteousness be by the law, then was Christ dead in vain,' Gal. ii. 21. Upon the same account it may be concluded, if expiation could be made by a creature for himself, in vain did God send his Son to be a propitiation for sin. Had

man himself been sufficient for it, God's sending his Son had rather appeared an act of cruelty to Christ than of mercy to us. Who could think God should expose the delight of his soul to our infirmities and a shameful death, if a sufficient sacrifice could have been found elsewhere? Besides, the wrath of God being so terrible that the human nature of Christ trembled at it, how is any creature ever able to bear the horror of it, and stand as a sacrifice under the weighty strokes of that justice?

(1.) What is a sacrifice for sin must be pure and sinless. God will not accept a defiled offering. He that provokes him by his own offence is not capable of appeasing him for his own or another's. The least blemish in a typical lamb rendered it unfit for the altar. God is infinitely pure who is offended; the law is exactly holy which is contemned. A compensation cannot be made to a holy God and a righteous law by the criminal without enduring an infinite penalty, which, because it cannot be *intensivè* so, must be *extensivè*, infinite in point of duration, *i. e.* since it cannot be infinite it must be perpetual. As he would be always suffering, so he would be always sinning, and wrath can never be appeased by that which provokes it at the same time it endeavours to pacify it. What is displeasing can never be capable of pleasing an infinite holiness. If a man had but one sin, and thought to expiate that by anything he could do, he would still need another sacrifice to expiate the sin of the former, and so would be always satisfying and always sinning, since 'there is no man that doth good and sins not,' *i. e.* in the doing of it, Ecces. vii. 20; he could not possibly find anything in himself or in any corrupted creature, where he might rest his foot with any content and security. Where any sin is, though but one, there can be no merit. Whatsoever is done after all our strength is gone is done by the grace of God. In that case God deserves service of us, but we deserve no acceptation from him. Since, therefore, we are not able since our fall to do one good work, we are not able to offer one acceptable sacrifice, how can man then satisfy for himself, any more than a man that owes a shilling pays that by borrowing two, whereby he is so far from paying his debt that he increaseth it?

(2.) An infinite sacrifice is necessary for a sin in some respects infinite; for every sin entrencheth upon the honour of an infinite God. An infinite sacrifice is due for an infinite offence. God is infinite in his glory, which is impaired, infinite in his sovereignty, which is degraded; the sacrifice must be of as great a dignity as the offence was of malignity. It must be fully proportioned to the sin of man and the majesty of God.* What man, nay, what creature is capable of such a proportion? The condition of his nature is too low, and the limits of his dignity too strait, to correspond with such an effect. The drop of a bucket and the dust of the balance are of too vile a nature to be a satisfactory sacrifice to God. All men are no more, Isa. xl. 15-17, nay, 'worse than nothing and vanity,' and therefore all men in the world put together would be so far from redeeming themselves by a sufficient sacrifice, that as themselves, so their sacrifice, would be worse than nothing and vanity, and would be overwhelmed under the punishment due to their offence. Finite bears no proportion to infinite, therefore a finite sacrifice carries no equivalent compensation in it for an infinite wrong; so that neither length of time nor strength of nature can ever make a recompence for that offence, which increaseth in proportion according to the dignity of the person against whom it is committed. If every hair of our head were a soul, and every soul a sacrifice, all would be too poor an amends for that glorious God wronged by us, though it had been but by one act of rebellion; for man cannot do any act of that value

* Amyraut, des Religions, p. 395.

in the nature of satisfaction, as one act of sin is injurious in the nature of wrong. Upon the same account of finiteness no angel could be a proportionable sacrifice to the justice of God for the sin of man; for, though the excellency of the angelical far transcends the nature of man, yet it cannot equal the dignity of God.* They are creatures, and an unconceivable distance is perpetually between creatures and the Creator; therefore saith Job, chap. iv. 18, 'He puts no trust in his servants, and his angels he chargeth with folly.' All the excellency of the angelical nature is despicable compared with God, and if God did not secure them they would fall; if God did not preserve light in them, they would be darkness as well as we. If they could not because they are creatures, man could not because he was a sinful creature; 'Thousands of rivers of oil, and thousands of rams,' would have borne far less proportion to the Creator of them, or to sins against him, Micah vi. 6, 7.

(3.) Necessary, in regard of the justice of God, which is an immutable and infinite perfection of the divine essence. As God is so infinitely holy as it is impossible he should not but hate the least sin, so he is infinite in his justice, and cannot let any sin go unpunished, since he hath declared by his law, that 'cursed is he that continueth not in all things of the law to do them,' and that it was irrevocably passed, that 'in the day man ate of the forbidden fruit he should die the death,' Gen. ii. 17. As the perfection of his nature requires that he should have for sin an implacable aversion, so the same perfection requires that justice be not appeased without punishment. Since God therefore would have a sacrifice for sin, to have one disproportioned to his infinite dignity and justice, had been the same as to have none at all. An infinite sacrifice cannot be offered but by an infinite person; it is necessary therefore that one of the persons of the Trinity should be this sacrifice, and it was most congruous to the wisdom of God, upon several accounts, that it should be the second. This sacrifice is necessary at least in point of becomingness. As God is the author of all things, and placed them in a rectitude from which they departed by their own folly, and sullied that glory they were created to manifest; it became him to bring things into order again by such a method as should manifest his hatred of that disorder sin had introduced into the world, and how strict a guardian he would be of the eternal order of things, and of those sacred laws whereby he governs the world: Heb. ii. 10, 'It became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering.' As God had made all things for his glory, so it was fit his Son, becoming the head of the world, should be put in such a posture as to shew forth the glory of God in the most illustrious manner. Now, in the sufferings of Christ, the justice of God flames more bright than it could in any creature, and shews itself inflexible against sin; the treasures of his grace are wider opened than could be in any other act, and his wisdom sparkles more gloriously in bringing men to glory by punishment; and since he made all things, and that for himself, it became him after the apostasy of man and the defacing the creation, to restore things in such a way as might conduce most to his own glory and the happiness of the creature.

4. Proposition. Christ only was fit to be this sacrifice. Whatsoever any creature could have done had been a debt of duty, and that could not have made a compensation for a debt of rebellion. Whatsoever a mere creature could do was by the gift of God, and therefore could not merit anything at the hand of God. Whatsoever is meritorious must be our own, as well as

* Amyraut, des Religions, p. 335.

that which is not due. Besides, from any other hand God would have received less than the offence merited; at the best, it would have been but a feigned and partial satisfaction, which had not been congruous to the wisdom and justice of God, since he determined it necessary to have a sacrifice. But Christ in his divine nature was 'equal with God,' Philip. ii. 6, and therefore in his person was answerable to the dignity of the person offended; and as he was in the form of a servant and innocent, he offered that which was not due from himself and upon his own account to God; for though as a creature he was bound to the obedience of the precepts of the law, yet as an innocent creature he was not obliged to the penalties of the law: suffering was in no wise due upon his own account. And he was without blemish. Had he been a criminal, he could not have been a remedy. He had also an alliance with both parties; he could treat with God as partaking of his glory, and be a sacrifice for man as partaking of the infirmities of his nature. He had a body to bear the stroke due to a victim, and a divine nature to sustain him under it. He had a human nature to offer as a sacrifice, and a divine nature to render it valuable and infinitely meritorious; being God and man, he wanted not a fitness to accomplish so great an undertaking. If he had not been man, he could not have been a sacrifice; and if he had not been God, he could not have been a remedy.

5. It was necessary, in regard of his office of priesthood, that he should be a sacrifice. He was constituted as 'a priest for ever,' by an oath, Ps. cx. 4. Now, he could not be a priest without a sacrifice; a priest and a sacrifice are relatives: Heb. v. 1, 'Every high priest taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. It is therefore of necessity that this man have something to offer,' Heb. viii. 3. As he was a prophet, he was to have a doctrine to teach; as a king, he was to have subjects to govern; as a priest, he was to have a sacrifice to offer; as he was a prophet, he was to deliver something from God to men; as he was a priest, he was to present something for man to God; as a prophet, he was to teach men obedience to God; as a priest, he was to make God propitious to men; that which he was to offer must be expiatory, that is the proper notion of a sacrifice; the other offerings are termed gifts. If he had offered the blood of bulls and goats, we had been in the same case we were in before; the insufficiency of them had not been removed by the dignity of the offerer; they could never in their own nature be proportioned to the dignity of the wronged sovereign, or be adequate to the punishment the criminal had deserved. The impossibility of their taking away sin is positively asserted, Heb. x. 4. The transcendent excellency of the priest could never alter the disproportion between the justice of God provoked by sin, and the death of the miserable beast for it; though the person offering had been greater, the thing offered had been the same; besides, the offending nature had not suffered, but a nature inferior to it. They must have been always offered, the repetition of them must have been continued, and had that been a proper employment for the Son of God, to have been always imbruing his hands in the blood of animals? But a sacrifice must be offered by him (if he did not offer one, he was no priest), and none but himself was a sacrifice worthy to be offered by so great a priest. He offered but once, and it was himself he offered, Heb. vii. 27. And this was so spotless, Heb. ix. 14; and of so sweet smelling savour, Eph. v. 2, that it need not again be repeated, Heb. ix. 28. His unblemished 'soul was made an offering for sin,' Isa. liii. 10. For being a priest of another kind than the legal priests, he must have a sacrifice of another kind.

6. Proposition. Jesus Christ, then, was a sacrifice in his human nature. To this end a body was prepared for him, to be substituted in the place of those sacrifices wherein God had no pleasure: Heb. x. 5, 'Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me.' Cited out of Ps. xl. 6, 'Mine ears hast thou opened' (as some* think figuratively, the ear being taken for the whole body, because obedience is learned by the ear, the instrument of hearing the will of another). The will of God was, that he should be an offering in this body: Heb. x. 10, 'By which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ once for all.' And his soul was an offering for sin, Isa. liii. 10. The first promise evidenced, that though the seed of the woman should tear up the empire of the devil, which by the law he had over sinners, yet it should be by the suffering something from him, by having his heel bruised. There was an obedience to the law to be performed, without which he had not been capable of being a sacrifice; the penalty of the law to be endured, without which he could not be an actual sacrifice. Neither of those could be but in the human nature; obedience to the law is not consistent with the sovereignty of God; according to his divine nature he was under no law. Suffering was impossible to the Deity; it is the property of God to be immutable and impassible. His human nature therefore was the sacrifice; for as he was made of a woman, whereby he took our nature, as he was made under the law, whereby he subjected himself to our obedience, he 'redeemed us from under the law,' from our condemnation, Gal. iv. 5. He that was to break the serpent's head, *i. e.* to dissolve the power which, as an executioner, he had from an offended God, was to be the seed of the woman. And this he effected by his death and bloody sacrifice, appeasing the wrath of God, and thereby destroying the power of the jailor, which he obtained by the entrance of sin and the curse of the law: Heb. ii. 14, 'Through death he destroyed him that had the power of death,' *i. e.* the devil. This sacrifice was both of soul and body, as the threatening was, 'In the day thou eatest thou shalt die the death,' *i. e.* be subject to the death and condemnation both of soul and body. As the reward of goodness respects the entire man, composed of soul and body, so doth the punishment of sin, which hath corrupted one as well as the other. The sacrifice therefore to be offered for the appeasing that wrath, and removing that curse, was to consist both of soul and body.

7. Proposition. That whereby this sacrifice was sanctified was the divine nature. Every sacrifice was sanctified by the altar, Mat. xxiii. 19. There must be something to add an infinite value to the sufferings of his humanity, † which could be nothing but the divine nature, and union with it. Nothing but that which is infinite can confer an infinite value on that which is finite. The infiniteness of dignity resides in the divine nature and essence, and the infiniteness of dignity is as incommunicable as the infiniteness of essence. For it hath its root and foundation in the infiniteness of being, and the one is but the reflection of the other. It is impossible to add a dignity without limits, but one must attribute an essence without bounds, as it is impossible that anything can possess the lustre and enlivening virtue of the sun but the sun itself. The human nature suffered, and the divine nature sanctified the humanity, and by reason of this admirable union, and the reflection of the divinity upon the humanity, what was done to the human nature upon the cross, is ascribed to the whole person. They 'crucified the Lord of glory,' 1 Cor. ii. 8. And God 'purchased the church with his own blood,' Acts xx. 28. It was this made his sufferings acceptable to God, whose justice was to be satisfied; and efficacious for

* Owen against Biddle, p. 477.

† Amyraut, des Religions, p. 336.

man, whose happiness and commerce with God were to be restored, and his indigencies to be supplied. Thus some interpret Heb. ix. 14, 'Through the eternal Spirit he offered himself to God,' understanding by eternal Spirit his Deity; not that he suffered in his divine nature, but by virtue of that presented himself to his Father a most acceptable sacrifice. So that he had a human nature to serve for a sacrifice, and an eternal spirit or divine nature, wherein he subsisted, from whence that sacrifice derived an infinite dignity, as gold, which hath a lustre of itself, hath a greater when the sun shines full upon it. We may see here how Christ was a priest, sacrifice, altar, in several respects: a priest in his person, a sacrifice in his humanity, the altar in his divinity. He was the offerer and the sacrifice, both are expressed: Eph. v. 2, 'He offered up himself.' Active as a priest, passive as a victim; as one, offering; as the other, offered. Upon this account of his blood being offered by his person, he is called God in the act of oblation of his blood for the redemption of the church, Acts xx. 28, 'which he,' referring to God, 'hath purchased with his own blood.' The Jews and soldiers were not the priests, as some affirm. They were the instruments of slaying him, but not with the intention of a sacrifice. They were instruments in it, but could not force him to it. His death was intended by them; his death as a sacrifice intended by himself; his laying down his life was of himself, John xx. 18, which is not meant barely of his death, but of his death as respecting his sheep, ver. 15, and indeed unless it had been voluntary, it had not been savoury.

8. Proposition. Upon the sacrifice of Christ all his other sacerdotal acts depend, and from thence they receive their validity for us. It is fit therefore we should well understand and often consider this sacrifice, which is the foundation of all our peace and comfort in reference to God. This was the chief thing God eyed in the first declaration of him, Gen. iii. 15, in the serpent's bruising his heel; nothing but this spoken of. His resurrection was first represented in the safety of Isaac, after he was designed to death, and other things not till after that successively; God making the light to dawn upon them by degrees.

(1.) This was the ground of his ascension and entrance into heaven as a priest. The high priest was not to enter within the veil without blood; what was in the type, was to be answered in the antitype. An expiatory sacrifice was necessary to precede his ascension to heaven; the sacrifice must be offered upon the earth, as the legal sacrifices were without,—heaven was no place for slaughter,—and with his blood he was to enter. Heaven's gates had been shut against him without it. Death was the penalty threatened, if the legal high priest ventured to step into the holy of holies without blood. The apostle argues from this, Heb. ix. 7, 'Into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people,' and ver. 25. According to this type, Christ by his own blood entered once into the holy place. How and in what order? After he had obtained redemption for us, Heb. ix. 12, which is ascribed to his death, ver. 15. His entrance into heaven, and what he doth for us there, is laid upon the account of his death as a sacrifice upon the earth; by virtue of which he went to heaven to present it to God, and apply it to us. And besides, all his royalty and power, whereby we have security and protection from him, depends upon this; for it is because of that obedience to blood and death which he rendered to God, that he hath given him a name above every name, and advanced him to a sovereign power: Philip. ii. 8, 9, 'Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him;' *wherefore*, referring to his death, ver. 8.

(2.) This is the foundation of his intercession. There are two functions of Christ's priesthood, oblation and intercession;* they are both joined together, but one as precedent to the other. The legal high priest, when he had first cut the throat of the sacrifice without (upon the day of the anniversary sacrifice), was not esteemed by that act to have completed his propitiation, till he had entered into the sanctuary, and sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice with his finger; so the propitiation made by our Redeemer was not fully complete till he entered into heaven to exercise his intercession. Yet the oblation precedes the intercession, and the intercession could not be without the oblation. It was with the blood of the victim, and no other blood, he was to enter. Without the oblation he would have had nothing to present in his intercession. They are placed in this order by the apostle, 1 John ii. 1, 2. He is first a sacrifice for propitiation, then an advocate for intercession. What he doth as an advocate, is grounded upon what he did as a sacrifice; and, were it not so, the apostle's arguing would not be valid, who placeth our salvation by the life of Christ upon our reconciliation by the death of Christ, Rom. v. 10. Indeed, he could not have been admitted, according to the type, as an advocate, but as being the high priest, and a high priest he could not have been without a sacrifice.

(3.) This is the foundation of all the grace any have. The conveyance of all the gracious love of Christ is through this channel. In redemption by his blood, the riches of the grace of God abounded, and that with the marks of the highest wisdom, Eph. i. 7, 8. All had laid buried from the view of man, and the fruition of men, without this sacrifice. This did commend his love, as well as satisfy his justice. His wrath had not been appeased, nor his grace drawn out to us without it; nor could the Redeemer lay any claim to any grace and mercy for those for whom he came, unless he had suffered for them as well as taken flesh for them. His offering himself, Isa. liii. 10-12, precedes his having a seed. The being and beauty of his seed depend upon the efficacy of his meritorious sacrifice. The offering his soul goes before the pardon of our sin; the payment of the ransom before the sprinkling it on us; the sealing of the covenant before the making good the covenant; his sufferings before his triumph, and the streams of his blood before the treasures of his grace. Upon the account of this sacrifice we enjoy the presence of God, protection against the enemies of our salvation, and receive the blessings necessary for our souls. By all this it appears that Christ is a sacrifice. This was his intent in coming. His death as a sacrifice was his intention in the assumption of our flesh; the prophecies predicted it, the types represented it; this he pursued, for this he thirsted. The accomplishment of this fiery baptism was the matter of his longing, his thoughts were never off from it, his will shrunk not from it; when his human will shewed some reluctance, it quickly returned to its fixedness: nothing could deter him, nothing could divert him. When he undertook to be mediator, he undertook to be a sacrifice, as a thing necessarily annexed to that office for the honour of God's justice, and the preservation of the rights of his sacred law. Upon which account, when the apostle speaks of this mediator, he adds with the same breath, 'who gave himself a ransom for all,' 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6. After the title of mediator follows 'the blood of sprinkling,' Heb. xii. 24. A mediator he was by means of his death, Heb. ix. 15. It is with good reason, therefore, that in our creed there is so quick a passage from the nativity of Christ to his passion, without any mention of the acts of his life, because he was incarnate, that he might be crucified.

The essence of a sacrifice consisted,

* Amyraut, Serm. sur Heb. ix. p. 187.

[1.] In the slaying or destroying it. [2.] In the offering it to God. Both were done in Christ.

[1.] In the slaying or destroying it. The shedding of the blood, the seat of the spirits, which are the instruments of action, was necessary to an expiatory sacrifice. The scape-goat, indeed, is called a sacrifice, Lev. xvi. 5, which was not slain in the temple, nor burned, but sent into the wilderness; and, as the Jews tell us, destroyed by being thrown down a rock, to which purpose men were appointed, who were to give notice of it by some signals from hill to hill, at a convenient distance, before which notice the congregation at Jerusalem did not dissolve. But the other expiatory sacrifices were devoured by fire; fire being the highest representation in the world of the justice of God. The sufferings of Christ extended to soul and body. He was scorched by the wrath of God, Ps. xxii; 'His soul poured out to death,' Isa. liii. 12, alluding to the blood of the sacrifices poured out; and his human nature dissolved by the separation of the soul and body.

[2.] In the offering it to God. Oblation to God was a main part of the sacrifice; so 'Christ offered himself to God,' Eph. v. 2. To God, as essentially considered, whereby the whole right of rectorship and dominion was acknowledged belonging to God. Had the death of Christ been only for example, it had not been offered to God, who was not capable of any example to be set him. It being, therefore, offered to him, manifests it to be a sacrifice.

Doct. 3. Christ was sacrificed for us. *ὑπὲρ*, when joined with suffering for another, always signifies in another's stead and place. It is so used, Rom. v. 7, 'For a good man some would even dare to die;' *i. e.* instead of a good man, to free him from the death he was designed to, not only for his sake; so Gal. iii. 13, 'He was made a curse for us,' *i. e.* in our stead, suffering the curse due to us for our sins. He is called 'the Lamb of God,' in regard of God's designation of him; our lamb, our passover, in regard of his substitution in our place; as he died to appease the wrath of God, his death referred to the justice of God; as that justice flamed out against us, his death referred to us; he was a screen between the heat of wrath and the sufferings of the creature; a mediator, respecting God for his satisfaction and glory, respecting us for our reparation and grace.

This will be cleared, if we consider,

1. That Christ could not be a sacrifice for himself. The Messiah was to be cut off, but not for himself, Dan. ix. 36; he needed no sacrifice for himself, as the other high priests did; they were sinners, he was harmless; they being encompassed with infirmities, needed, or ought to offer sacrifices for themselves, Heb. v. 2, 3; he was 'a lamb without blemish,' 1 Peter i. 19, who 'knew no sin, nor was guile found in his mouth,' nor did he ever do any thing displeasing to his Father, John viii. 29. He needed no glory to be purchased for him, for he was from eternity happy in the same essence with the Father, being 'God blessed for ever, over all,' Rom. ix. 5, having the command over all, and wanting nothing to a perfect blessedness. The sacrifices, which were types of him, could not be for themselves; they were not capable of sinning, as wanting a rational nature, and therefore a sinful nature. A beast was not capable of sin, because not capable of a law, and therefore its blood was not due for any sin of its own. Christ had no sin, none actual; 'no guile was found in his mouth,' 1 Peter ii. 22; nor original; that was stopped by his extraordinary conception by the Holy Ghost, which rendered him immaculate.

2. Sacrifices implied this. They had a relation to the offerer, and were substituted in his place. The substitution of the sacrifice in the place of the offenders, was always supposed by the heathen; hence did the offering of human victims arise, their opinion being that they could not present to God a nobler creature in their stead than one of their own nature. The notion of all sacrifices was, that they were in the place of a sinner to appease the offending* deity, and exempt the guilty person from punishment. And the actions about the Jewish sacrifices manifested this: the offerer laid his hand upon the head of the beast, signifying by that ceremony its consecration to God, and owning the translation of his guilt upon that creature, and putting it in his place to undergo the punishment deserved by his sin, Lev. iv. 24-29. And in this action of laying on hands, both hands, and with all their strength, as the Jews tell us, confession of sin was made by the presenter of the sacrifice, which signified also the disburdening of his guilt upon the head of the victim. By those actions was manifested a transferring of sin from the offender to the sacrifice, and of the death due to the criminal in like manner; besides, the pouring out of the blood, wherein the soul of the beast was supposed to be, was destined for the expiation of the sin of the soul of the offerer, Lev. xvii. 11-14; not that the blood is properly the soul, but because the vital spirits, which are the instruments of action, and conveying the virtue of the soul to particular members, are seated in the blood.

3. The whole economy of Christ is expressed in the whole Scripture to have a relation to us. All things preparatory to his sufferings were for us; some were first given to him, before he was given for them: John xvii. 9, he took flesh for us; Isa. ix. 6, 'Unto us a child is born;' for us he had a 'fulness of grace' in his human nature, John i. 16; for our sakes he did dedicate himself, that we might be sanctified, John xvii. 19; for us he gave himself, Gal. ii. 20; in the very moment of his sufferings, our iniquities were laid upon him, that health, by his stripes, might be derived to us. Christ was a common person for us, as the scape-goat was common to the whole congregation, Lev. xvi. 21, representing all of them; Christ was a common person for us, as Adam was, to whom, in this regard, he is compared: Rom. v. 14, 'Who is,' *i. e.* Adam, 'the figure of him that was to come.' The apostle compares one Adam and one Christ; he illustrates the condition and the actions of the one by the condition and actions of the other, what happened to us by Adam and what happened to us by Christ. This typicalness of Adam cannot be in any other regard than as he was a common person, representing all that were in his loins by natural generation. In this regard Christ is called 'the second man,' 1 Cor. xv. 47: 'The first man is of the earth earthly, the second man is the Lord from heaven.' Not that he was the second man born in the world (for many ages were run before his incarnation) but the second common root in the world. As when Adam, being the first root of mankind in a natural way, fell, the curse came upon him and all his posterity, and the standing punishments pronounced against him did reach, and were meant of all his posterity, Gen. iii. 19, not only of Adam personal, but of Adam as a representative, and so of all those who were not yet born into the world; as we sinned in Adam as a common root of natural generation, so we were all sacrificed in Christ as a common head of all that are in him by a spiritual union: the one merited death and damnation for all that descend from him; the other life and salvation for all that believe in him.

4. Our sins were imputed to him as to a sacrifice. Christ the just is put in the place of the unjust to suffer for them; 1 Pet. iii. 18. Christ is said to bear sin as a sacrifice bears sin, Isa. liiii. 10-12. His soul was made an

* Qu. 'offended'?—ED.

offering for it; but sin was so laid upon the victims, as that it was imputed to them in a judicial account, according to the ceremonial law, and typically expiated by them. Christ had not taken away our sins as mediator, had he not borne the punishment of them; as a surety, 'He was made sin for us,' 2 Cor. v. 21, and he bare our sins, which is evident by the kind of death he suffered, not only sharp and shameful, but accursed, having a sense of God's wrath linked to it.

(1.) It cannot be understood of the infection of sin. The filth of our nature was not transmitted to him. Though he was made sin, yet he was not made a sinner by any infusion or transplantation of sin into his nature. It was impossible his holiness could be defiled with our filth.

(2.) But that our sin was the meritorious cause of his punishment. All those phrases, that Christ 'died for our sins,' 1 Cor. xv. 3, and was 'delivered to death for our offences,' Rom. iv. 23, clearly import sin to be the meritorious cause of the punishment Christ endured. Sin cannot be said to be the cause of punishment but by way of merit. If Christ had not been just, he had not been capable of suffering for us;* had we not been unjust, we had not merited any suffering for ourselves, much less for another. Our unrighteousness put us under a necessity of a sacrifice, and his righteousness made him fit to be one. What was the cause of the desert of suffering for ourselves was the meritorious cause of the sufferings of the Redeemer after he put himself in our place. The sin of the offerer merited the death of the sacrifice presented in his stead.

(3.) Our sins were charged upon him in regard of their guilt. Our sins are so imputed to him, as that they are not imputed to us, 2 Cor. v. 19, and not imputed to us, because he was made a curse for us, Gal. iii. 13. He bore our sins, as to the punishment, is granted. If he were an offering for them, they must in a judicial way be charged upon him. If by being made sin be understood a sacrifice for sin (which indeed is the true intent of the word sometimes in Scripture), sin was then legally transferred on the antitype, as it was on the types in the Jewish service by the ceremony of laying on of hands, and confessing of sin, after which the thing so dedicated became accursed, and though it was in itself innocent, yet it was juridically and *substitutive* nocent.† In the same manner was Christ accounted, as on the contrary believers are personally nocent, but by virtue of the satisfaction of this sacrifice imputed to them they are judicially counted innocent. Christ, who never sinned, is put in such a state as if he had; and we, who have always sinned, are put into such a state by him as if we never had. As we are made righteous in him, so he was made sin for us. Now, as justifying righteousness is not inherent in us, but imputed to us, so our condemning sin was not inherent in Christ, but imputed to him. There would else be no consistency in the antithesis: 2 Cor. v. 21, 'He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.' He knew no sin, yet he became sin. It seems to carry it further than only the bearing the punishment of sin. He was judicially charged in our stead with the guilt of sin. Our iniquities were laid upon him, Isa. liii. 6. He had spoken, ver. 5, of his bearing the chastisement of our peace, the punishment of our sin, and then seems to declare the ground of that, which consisted in God's imputation of sin to him in laying upon him the iniquities of us all. What iniquities? Our goings astray, our turnings every one to his own way. He made him to be that sin which he knew not; but he knew the punishment of sin; the knowledge of that was the end of his coming. He came to lay down his life a ransom for many. He knew not sin by an experimental inherency, but he knew it

* Ball on the Covenant, p. 278.

† Turretin.

by judicial imputation. He knew it not in regard of the spots, but he knew it in regard of the guilt following upon the judgment of God. He was righteous in his person, but not judicially or juridically pronounced righteous as our surety till after his sacrifice, when he was 'taken from prison and from judgment,' Isa. liii. 8. Till he had paid the debt, he was accounted as a debtor to God.

[1.] The apostle distinguisheth his second coming from his first by this : Heb. ix. 28, 'He shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation.' It is not meant of the filth of sin, for so he appeared at first without sin, but without the guilt of sin which he had at his first coming derived, or taken upon himself to satisfy for, and remove from the sinner. He shall appear without sin to be imputed, without punishment to be inflicted. At the time of his first coming, he appeared with sin, with sin charged upon him, as our surety arrested for our criminal debts. He pawned his life for the lives which we had forfeited, and suffered the penalty due by law, that we might have a deliverance free by grace. In his first coming, he represented our persons as an undertaker for us ; our sins were therefore laid upon him. In his second coming, he represents God as a vicegerent, and so no sin can be charged upon him.

[2.] He cannot well be supposed to suffer for our sins, if our sins in regard of their guilt be not supposed to be charged upon him. How could he die, if he were not a reputed sinner? Had he not first had a relation to our sin, he could not in justice have undergone our punishment. He must in the order of justice be supposed a sinner really, or by imputation ; really he was not, by imputation then he was. How can we conceive he should be made a curse for us, if that which made us accursed had not been first charged upon him? It is as much against divine justice to inflict punishment where there is no sin, as it is to spare an offender who hath committed a crime, or to clear the guilty, which by no means God will do, Exod. xxxiv. 7. The consideration of a crime precedes the sentence, either upon an offender or his surety. We cannot conceive how divine justice should inflict the punishment, had it not first considered him under guilt. Though the first designation of the Redeemer to a suretyship or sacrifice for us was an act of God's sovereignty, yet the inflicting punishment after that designation, and our Saviour's acceptance of it, was an act of God's justice, and so declared to be : Rom. iii. 26, 'to declare his righteousness, that he might be just,' that he might declare his justice in justification, his justice to his law. Can this highest declaration of justice be founded upon an unjust act? Had that been justice or injustice to Christ, to lay his wrath upon the Son of his love, one whose person was always dear to him, always pleased him ; had he not stood as a sinner juridically in our stead, and suffered that sin, which was the ruin of mankind, to be cast with all the weight of it, upon his innocent shoulders? After by his own act he had engaged for our debt, God in justice might demand of him every farthing, which, without that undertaking, and putting himself in our stead, could not be done ; which submission of his, and compliance with it, is expressed twice, Isa. liii. 7, by his not opening his mouth ; and no wrong is done to a voluntary undertaker. Add this too. It is from his standing in our stead as guilty that the benefit of his death doth redound to us. His death had had no relation to us, had not our sin been juridically adjudged to be his ; nor can we challenge an acquittance at the hands of God for our debts, if they were not our debts that he paid on the cross. 'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities,' Isa. liii. 5. The laying hands upon the head of the sin-offering was necessary to make it a sacrifice for the offender, without

which ceremony it might have been a slain but not a sacrificed beast. The transferring our iniquities upon him must in some way precede his being bruised for them, which could not be any other way than by imputation, whereby he was constituted by God a debtor in our stead, to bear the punishment of our sin. He being made sin for us, our sin was in a sort made his; he was made sin without sin, he knew the guilt without knowing the filth, he felt the punishment without being touched with the pollution. Since death was the wages of sin, and passed as a penalty for a violated law, Rom. vi. 23, it could not righteously be inflicted on him had not sin first been imputed to him. In his own person, he was in the arms of his Father's love; as he represented our sinful persons, he felt the strokes of his Father's wrath.

5. The sufferings of this sacrifice are imputed unto us. He took our sins upon himself, as if he had sinned, and gave us the benefit of his sufferings, as if we had actually suffered and satisfied.* He 'offered one sacrifice for sin for ever,' Heb. x. 12, *i. e.* 'to take away sin,' if you compare it with ver. 11; to remove the wrath due to us by reason of iniquity was the end he aimed at. As our sins were imputed to him for punishment, so his sufferings are imputed to us for acceptance: Eph. i. 6, 7, 'Who hath made us accepted in the beloved, in whom we have redemption through his blood.' Christ had the relation of an undertaker for us, and we the relation of debtors to God. Our debts then being charged upon him, his payment must be imputed to us; the surety and the principal are legally regarded as one person, so are the representative and the persons represented by him. As Adam and all mankind were as one person, and as all Israel were called Jacob from the common root of them, so Christ and believers are as one person, and what he did, is as if a believer himself did it, as the suffering of the sacrifice was accepted in lieu of the life of the sinner. By the stripes of our sacrifice we are healed, Isa. liii. 5, an exchange is made, stripes to him, health to us; he was made a curse that we might be freed from the curse, Gal. iii. 13. The first thing rising upon faith from the sufferings of Christ is a non-imputation of sin: 2 Cor. v. 21, 'Not imputing their trespasses unto them.' They are not imputed to a believer, because borne by the undertaker for him. The main end of his death as a sacrifice was to communicate a righteousness to us: Gal. ii. 21, 'If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.' If this were the main or only thing that would make the death of Christ a mere vanity, then the great and main end of his death was to procure a complete righteousness for us, a righteousness whereby he was to be glorified, a righteousness whereby we might be justified; his sufferings procured it, his resurrection endured it, Rom. iv. 25. All the world stands guilty before God, cannot present God with a righteousness of their own commensurate to the law; not one act any man can do can bear proportion to it, all strength to do anything suitable to it was lost in Adam. Since no righteousness of our own can justify, it must be the righteousness of the Son of God which must be imputed to us, in the same manner our sins were imputed to him. As it is accepted by God for us, so it is accounted by God to us: 2 Cor. v. 21, 'He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' Sin was in us, but charged upon Christ; righteousness is in Christ and imputed to us; therefore the apostle adds *him*, to signify that it is not our own righteousness, but another's, not inherent in us, but imputed to us.

The redounding of these sufferings to us ariseth,

1. From the dignity of the person undertaking to be a sacrifice for us,

* Turretin.

and the union of our nature with his. He assumed our nature that he might be a common person, and stand in our stead; he had not been a fit representative of us without it. But the main consideration is, 'the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him bodily,' Col. ii. 9, and his being the man God's fellow, Zech. xiii. 7, whereby what he did and suffered in our stead became, according to the value of the person performing it, infinitely meritorious for those for whom he suffered, being infinitely more than all the obedience of men and angels, and more meritorious of happiness than sin could be of misery. As infinite sin deserves an infinite punishment, because it receives its aggravation from the dignity of the person against whom it is committed, so the sufferings of Christ, though finite in regard of his human nature, received an infinite value from the infiniteness of his person, equivalent to the debts of all that come to him. Sin is finite in regard of the subject, infinite in regard of the great God against whom it is. The sufferings of Christ are infinite in regard of the subject, and infinitely please the governor of the world, unto whom the offering is made, and therefore are of more force to convey a righteousness and beauty to the creature, than sin is to convey guilt and filth. Though sin abounded, grace did much more abound, Rom. 5.

2. From union with this infinite person by faith. All believers have a communion with him in his death: 2 Cor. v. 14, 'If one died for all, then were all dead.' All were accounted as dying, and bearing the wrath of God, by God's reckoning that death to them. As the sin of Adam is imputed to all his natural posterity, as being one with him in his loins, so are the sufferings of Christ imputed to all his spiritual seed, Rom. v. 18, as being one with him in a real union. Hence we are said to be 'crucified with Christ,' Rom. vi. 6, and 'risen with him,' Eph. ii. 6, as in the person representing us, as if the same wrath endured by Christ had been endured by us, and the same acquittance given to Christ had been given to us by God together with him; for all his meritorious passions were endured by him in the name of his elect, and for their use, and are fully belonging in the fruit and benefit of them to every believer. What Christ as a mediator did personally do, redounds in the benefit of it to Christ mystical, and is reckoned to every member of his body; we are made, we, and every one of us that believe, are made the righteousness of God in him. Well then, Christ bearing our iniquities is the cause of our justification: Isa. liii. 11, 'By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities.' If our sin had not been imputed to him, his righteousness could not be accounted to us; the commutation is clear, he first bears our iniquities that we might partake of his righteousness.

Use. If Christ be a sacrifice,

1. We may see the miserable blindness of the Jews in expecting the Messiah as a temporal conqueror. The Jews wait for such a one to this day. Though the promises represent spiritual deliverances under temporal grandeurs, not to raise carnal hopes but spiritual apprehensions, yet are there not multitudes of places which speak of sufferings, misery, death? Is not his heel to be bruised, his garments to be parted, a restoration to be made by him of what he took not away? Are not the sacrifices of the law to be perfected, his soul to be made an offering for sin, wounds made for transgression, his hands and his feet to be pierced? It was not by the slaying the bodies of men that he is to 'make reconciliation for the iniquities' of men, Dan. ix. 24. How can he be a conqueror of kingdoms who is to be cut off, and the city where he was to be destroyed as with a flood, and the desolations of it to be determined? ver. 25, כרת, penally cut off, as it signi-

fies, Lev. xvii. 4, as one was cut off that had no sacrifice allowed for him.* The right apprehensions of the promises concerning the Messiah in the Old Testament, what he was to be, what he was to do, cannot let you be ignorant of him in the New. How do those poor people overturn at once the whole design of that divine law they seem to reverence in the highest degree! What blindness will seize upon the hearts of men, even under the oracles of God, if the Spirit of God doth not vouchsafe to enlighten them!

2. If Christ be a sacrifice, it shews the necessity of a satisfaction to the justice of God, and a higher satisfaction than men could perform. Blood must satisfy justice, and no blood but that of the Son of God could be a sufficient and valuable propitiation. If mere mercy could or would have pardoned, it might have done it with or without the blood of the poor creatures mangled under the law. But, alas! neither the blood of those, nor the blood of a rational creature, could take away sin. Less than death justice could not demand; death was settled by the immediate order of God as the penalty of the law. The law, then, after transgression, could not be vindicated in its honour without death. A God of infinite goodness delights not in the shedding the blood of his creatures, nor can we suppose him to be pleased with the effusion of the blood of animals. The institution of the legal sacrifices could not be exemplary to man. What virtue could the pangs of a dying beast represent to him? No other ends can be imagined but an acknowledgment of guilt, the desert of sin, the debt of death, the necessity of a higher satisfaction, and the raising them up to a faith in the promise of God, that another valuable sacrifice should be put in the room of the sinner, to take away that sin, which the blood of beasts and the eternal groans of men were not able to remove.

3. Christ, as sacrificed, is the true and immediate object of faith. We are revolted from God, and are made incapable of performing the terms of the first covenant. The precepts of the law are too holy for our corrupt nature, the penalties of the law too grievous to be borne by our feeble nature; a remedy must be looked after. When the venom of sin begins to work in the conscience, and the thunder of the law alarms it to judgment, and the punishment due to sin is presented in the horrors of it, the question immediately is, Whether there be any remedy, and where? How forgiveness of sin is to be attained? The only remedy is proposed in Christ, and Christ as a sacrifice. It is not Christ risen, or ascended, or exalted; not Christ only as the Son of God, or the head of angels; not Christ as the creator of the world, or by whom all things consist; but Christ as answering the terms of the first covenant, as disarming justice: and this he did as a sacrifice. By this he bore the curse, by this he broke down the partition wall, by this he joined apostate man and an offended God. This is that true faith pitcheth on, daily revolves, and daily applies to. This is the first object of the soul, Christ made sin, Christ bearing the punishment, Christ substituted in the room of the offender. His resurrection and ascension come in afterward to ascertain the comfort. But as his being a sacrifice is the foundation of his being an advocate, a prince, a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins, so it is the foundation of peace in ourselves. This is that which pacifies God, and only what pacifies God can pacify conscience. This death as a sacrifice purchased our comfort, because it purchased the comforter. Christ begged not the Spirit before he died, John xvi. 7; he assures them he could not come, unless himself went; and he could not have gone with any success to heaven, if he had not shed his blood; justice would have stopped his entrance: Luke xxiv. 26, 'Ought not Christ to have suffered those

* Owen.

things, and to enter into his glory?' Suffering was to precede his glory. Besides, our comfort lies in his being an advocate. But how is he an advocate? With his blood in his hands. It is by his blood he speaks in heaven, and by his blood faith speaks to God. He paid the debt in his suffering, and pleads the payment in his glory. The payment went before the plea in order of nature, and our eyeing the payment precedes our eyeing the plea in order of faith. Both respect God as the rector. Christ, without his garments rolled in blood, could not be answerable to God, nor acceptable to a sinner. Faith is therefore called 'faith in his blood,' Rom. iii. 25. As faith is the instrument of justification, so it must eye the cause of our justification, and under that notion wherein it is the cause; and that is Christ as groaning and offering up himself to God a ransom, a righteousness for many. The curse upon Adam is the lash wherewith an angry conscience scourgeth a sinner. The freedom from this curse is only found in the vengeance God exacted of the Redeemer for the sins of all that return to him by repentance. Both the death and resurrection of Christ concur to the same end, viz., our justification, Rom. xiv. 9, but in different manners; his death as the meritorious cause, his resurrection as declarative of the sufficiency of his death to that end, that as the Son of God and surety of men, he had performed whatsoever he undertook in his being a sacrifice. But the first act of relying faith is about him as a bloody victim. As often as the Israelites were stung by the fiery serpents, they were to look up for health to the serpent lifted up, a type and emblem of the death of Christ. Upon every sin of a believer, the sacrifice is pleaded in heaven by the priest, and ought, in the remembrance of it, to be renewed in the repeated acts of our faith.

4. It is no true opinion that Christ died only for an example. Wounded he was for the transgressions in Isaiah's time, when his example could reach only those that came after him; but the credit of his sufferings upon his promise to undergo them, might and did reach to the first ages of the world. The expressions in Isa: liii. sound his death higher than a bare pattern, or a testimony to the truth. The notion of expiation of sin was always implied in the notion of a sacrifice, even among the heathens. When they parted with the dearest first-born of their bodies to Moloch, it was not for an example, but for the sin of the soul, Micah vi. 6. As Christ was the Son of God sent, he was a testimony of the love of God; as he was a sacrifice, he was our ransom from the curse of the law.

5. Comfort to every true believer. He was sacrificed *for us*; God counted him a sinner for our sakes, that he might count us righteous for his sake.

(1.) As Christ hath been sacrificed for them, so he has been accepted for them. He is no more to be made sin, iniquity no more to be charged upon him; his next appearance shall be without the imputation of sin, for the conferring salvation, Heb. ix. 28, with all the bonds of a believer's sins cancelled. He is pronounced God's righteous servant, and from this declaration of his righteousness, and the true and believing knowledge of it, doth our justification arise, Isa. liii. 11. Had it not been a perfect sacrifice, it could never have wrought such complete effects, and 'for ever have perfected those that are sanctified,' Heb. x. 14. He is gone with the smoke of his sacrifice to heaven, and was well entertained, which is a signification of the completeness and perfection of his righteousness for man, John xvi. 9, 10. The pure and piercing eye of divine justice could not perceive a spot in him. Had any blemish been, it could not have escaped an infinite knowledge. Nor could the justice of God, in turning over all the registers of the debts owing from the creatures, perceive one but might be cancelled upon

the value of this payment, if the creature did not negligently or wilfully refuse his own delivery, and prefer his debts and captivity before it. It was a sacrifice offered according to God's heart, with which his soul was infinitely well pleased. The person of the Son of God made every gaping wound, every panting groan, and doleful agony, grateful to God, and profitable for us. The Godhead united to the manhood put an unexpressible value upon every pang. Not that every pang, or the least drop of blood, was sufficient for our redemption (the law required death, and death must be suffered); but all those passions preceding his death were meritorious in conjunction with his death.

(2.) This sacrifice unites all the attributes of God together for a believer's interest. The flood-gates of mercy are opened, and the fire of justice confined in its flames. The flames of the one centre in Christ, that the streams of the other might flow down to us; rivers of mercy quench not the flames of justice, nor the flames of justice suck up the rivers of mercy. As the sacrificing Christ is a vengeance against sin, it is an act of justice; as it is a means of remission of the sins of those for whom he was sacrificed, it is an act of mercy to the creature. Both justice and mercy join hands to help the fallen creature up. God is just in being merciful, and merciful in being just; so that we may well cry aloud with the psalmist, Ps. cxvi. 5, 'Gracious is the Lord, and righteous.' Justice struck the sacrifice, that the streams of mercy might have a fuller scope. Compassion helped justice to a satisfaction more honourable than could have been had from creatures; and justice helped mercy to a fuller and more illustrious exercise of itself than ever it could have had without it. Justice is now a second to mercy, of an antagonist it is become an advocate. God must be unjust, if he be not merciful to a believer. Since our high priest hath been faithful to God, God will not be unfaithful to him, or those for whom he offered up himself. Happy must he be that hath mercy supplicating, and justice itself pleading for him.

(3.) This sacrifice is of eternal virtue. The virtue of the sacrifice is parallel to the office of his priesthood; a priest and a sacrifice are relatives. The immutable oath, then, that constituted him a priest for ever, settles for ever the value and virtue of the sacrifice; for without a sacrifice he could not be a priest; his office would expire if the virtue of his sacrifice did; they eternally live together in conjunction. It is 'the blood of an everlasting covenant,' Heb. xiii. 20. It is an everlasting covenant, because an everlasting blood whereby it was settled. The ground of its prevalency is, that it was not the sacrifice of a mere man, but of God, Heb. ix. 14.

(4.) The effects of this sacrifice therefore are perfect, glorious, and eternal. It is our deliverance from wrath, the scorplings of hell, and terrors of punishment. The purity of this sacrifice expiates the impurities of our services. No sin so great but the value of this sacrifice, believed in, can answer it. The highest sin is the transgression of the law, and this is the satisfaction of the whole penalty of the law. Sin is an offence against God, and this sacrifice is the highest pleasure to him. None of our sins can be so great as those that met upon the back of this innocent lamb. It is enough to cross every book of accounts; 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth,' and 'Christ that died,' Rom. viii. 33, 34. 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ,' because he hath as a sacrifice 'for sin condemned sin in the flesh,' Rom. viii. 1-3. Not, no desert of condemnation, that there is; not, no condemnation because of something done by themselves; no, but because of something done by Christ, who hath obliterated the bloody roll of sin and curses by his blood. God

will not refuse it to any that believingly plead it; he will not be unjust to the true value of it, nor to his own ordination. If it be unrighteous in God to 'forget the labour of a believer's love,' Heb. vi. 10, it will be so to forget the obedience of his Son, and the person interested in it. God was not so ready to bruise him for us, but he will be as ready to apply the plaster of his blood to us.

How great, then, is the happiness of a believer on the account of this sacrifice! Whatsoever is lost by the sin of the first Adam, is gained by the sacrifice of the second; with what boldness may we enter into the holiest with this blood of Jesus in our hands and hearts, Heb. x. 19.

6. We must then lay hold on this sacrifice. The people were to be sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice, Exod. xxiv. 8, so must we with the blood of our Lamb. Thus only can it save us, 1 Peter i. 2. Thus is our Saviour described by this part of his office: Isa. lii. 15, 'He shall sprinkle many nations.' Our guilt cannot look upon a consuming fire without a propitiatory sacrifice; our services are blemished, so that they will rather provoke his justice than merit his mercy; we must have something to put a stop to a just fury, expiate an infinite guilt, and perfume our unsavoury services. Here it is in Christ, but there must be faith in us. Faith is as necessary by the ordination of God in a way of instrumentality, as the grace of God in a way of efficiency, and the blood of Christ in a way of meritoriousness of our justification. All must concur, the will of God the offended governor, the will of the sacrificing mediator, and the will of the offender. This will must be a real will, an active operative will, not a faint velleity. We must have a faith to justify our persons, and we must have an active sincerity to justify the reality of our faith. Christ was real in his sacrifice, God was real in the acceptance of it, we must be real in believing it. Rocks and mountains cannot secure them that neglect so great a sacrifice, that regard this atoning blood as an unholy thing. It is as dreadful for men to have this sacrifice smoking against them, and this blood calling for vengeance on them, as it is comfortable to have it pleaded for them and sprinkled on them. Why will any then despise and neglect a necessary sovereign remedy ready at hand? Is it excusable, that when we should have brought the sacrifice ourselves, or ourselves have been the sacrifice, we should slight him who hath voluntarily been a sacrifice for us, and cherish a hell merited by our sin, rather than accept of a righteousness purchased at no less rate than the blood of God? This sacrifice is full of all necessary virtue to save us, but the blood of it must be sprinkled upon our souls by faith. Without this we shall remain in our sins, under the wrath of God and sword of vengeance.

7. We must be enemies to sin, since Christ was a sacrifice for it. Unless sin die in us, we cannot have an evidence that this sacrifice was slain for us. He that hath an interest in Christ's blood must be planted 'into the likeness of his death,' Rom. vi. 5. We are highly unjust, if we will not sacrifice a beloved sin for him, who sacrificed a precious life, of more value than heaven and earth, for us. We should empty ourselves of our filth, since he emptied himself of his glory. The very expression, *sacrificed for us*, carries a force and a spirit in it to animate us to this. We must be friends to the duties God enjoins us. It is disingenuity to put him off with a shred of our souls, or a grain of service, who became a holocaust for us. Scanty services are fit only for a scanty sacrifice. As God shews in this sacrifice his compassions to the sinner, so he declares the certainty and terror of his penalties upon the obstinate rebel. If the Son of God, undertaking to be a sacrifice, was not preserved from death upon the account of his filiation, men cannot expect but to sink under it upon the account of their rebellion. Well, then,

let us not look upon the least sin without horror, since it is a crime not to be expiated by any lower price than an infinite blood. It should cause us to mourn also for sin. It was our unrighteousness made Christ's back and his soul to suffer; he had never felt the wrath of his Father, if we had not broke the law of his Father. When the death of Christ, our sacrifice, comes into our thoughts, the remembrance of our sins should bear it company. We should never consider that Christ died, but we should join also with sorrow the consideration of that for which he died.

A DISCOURSE OF THE VOLUNTARINESS OF CHRIST'S DEATH.

And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and has given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savour.—EPH. V. 2.

THE exhortation in this verse to a mutual love, depends upon what the apostle had urged in the end of the former chapter, where he had endeavoured to persuade them to a kindness and tender-heartedness to one another, and backed it by the pattern God had set them in his pardoning grace; and in ver. 1 of this chapter, he extends that motive to all other duties, and draws a general maxim for their observance; that they ought to imitate God in all things imitable by a creature: ver. 1, 'Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children.' Consider the great example God hath set you, and as you have obligations to him, not only as your God, but your Father; so imitate him, not only as creatures, but as children, and express in your lives those admirable perfections which he hath engraven on you by regeneration, and especially his patience and meekness in bearing, and his love and kindness in pardoning, those that injure you.

Doctrine. Those that lay claim to a relation to God, without imitation of him, are not children, but bastards. They may be of his family by instruction, not by descent. There is no implantation in Christ, without an imitation both of the Creator and Redeemer.

He doth prosecute the exhortation in this verse. 'Walk in love,' let the perpetual tenor of your lives be in love; and that by the example of Christ, as before he had done it by the example of God, which indeed Christ had in person urged to his disciples before his departure from them: John xiii. 14, 15, 'I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you;' and amplifies this example of the love of Christ,

1. From the effect: his passion.

2. The manner of it: voluntary, *has given*.

3. The subject of it: *himself*.

4. The end of it: *a sacrifice*.

5. The event and fruit of it: *a sweet-smelling savour.* εἰς ὁσμὴν εὐωδίας.

A fragrant odour, which by a *metalepsis* is put for the appeasing God, it having a wonderful force to appease the wrath of God, which was inflamed against us. The most generous example to imitate, is the person of our

Saviour ; the most efficacious motive to persuade to that imitation, is the sacrifice of our Saviour ; the course of our lives ought to be in love, not only an act, a spurt, but a walk. 'As Christ hath loved us.' An *as* of similitude, not of equality ; we cannot equal the stature of Christ's affections, but we may draw in our life lineaments like to his.

The latter words are the subject of this discourse. *Loved us.* This is the first spring of all the actions of Christ towards us, and the passion of Christ for us ; there could be no other motive as it respected us. Our misery might excite his pity, but his affection produced his passion ; he loved us as God, in common with his Father ; he loved us as man, by a participation of our nature. In this love, there is his divine will as a priest, his human will as a sacrifice ;* he pitied us while we were insensibly hurried down by the devil to a gulf of perdition : love was the only impulse, love excited him, love prepared him, love sent him, love offered him ; the highest assurance of his love was the loss of his life, the excellency of the fruit shews the goodness of the tree.

Has given himself. He was given by God, yet he offered himself, Παρέδωκεν ; there was a joint consent : 'The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do,' John v. 19. It is spoken after the manner of men, as sons learn of their fathers, and imitate them in their actions. Christ's giving himself, implies the Father's giving him.

Himself. He was both the priest and the sacrifice ; he offered not gold or silver, or a whole world, but himself, more precious than millions of worlds, composed only of angels and innumerable spirits, as excellent as the omnipotency of God could create.

Himself. Not only his body of flesh, not only his soul or Spirit, but himself, his whole person. His soul, his body, himself the Son of God, and the Son of man ; † he loved us as he loved himself, above what he loved himself, shall I say ? He exposed his life for us, his most holy person for us ; the act of his murderers is not regarded as a sweet-smelling savour, but his own act of obedience.

To whom did he thus give himself ? *To God.* To that God, whom by our base apostasy we had rendered ourselves obnoxious, and had fallen under his deserved wrath. Our Saviour was God's before, as he was the Son of God, but he delivers himself to God, ‡ as a mediator, a victim to satisfy for our sins, and reconcile us to our injured Creator ; he offered himself to God, as the judge and revenger of sin, the guardian of the law, the asserter of his truth in his threatening ; he appeared before God as sitting upon a seat of justice, that he might open to us a throne of grace.

To what end did he deliver himself ? *An offering and a sacrifice.* Not like an offering or like a sacrifice, § but an offering, a sacrifice ; not to do us a small kindness, but to offer his life for us ; he would die in our stead, that we might live by his death ; not only an offering, but a sacrifice, an incense to be consumed into smoke, a sacrifice to be stuck and bled to death ; all the offerings and sacrifices of the law were completed in Christ. All his life wherein he acted for the glory of God was an offering ; || in his death, he bled and expired as a sacrifice ; he underwent a death, not honourable, but ignominious, and not only ignominious among men, but joined with the legal curse of God. ¶ As he was the Son of God, he gave himself, having power to do it, John x. 18 Unless he had been the Son of God, he could never have been a sufficient sacrifice for us.

For a sweet-smelling savour. He gave himself with an intention to be ac-

* Cocceius.

† Musculus.

‡ Zanchius in loc.

† Zanchius.

§ As Grellius in loc.

¶ Bodius in loc.

cepted, and God received him with a choice acceptation. Sacrifices under the law were accounted by God as a sweet savour, Lev. i. 9, iii. 16, Exod. xxix. 41. This expression is first mentioned at the time of the sacrifice of Noah, Gen. viii. 21, so God is said to smell an offering, 1 Sam. xxvi. 19. God accepted Noah's sacrifice, and took an occasion from thence of declaring his counsel to Noah, that he would not destroy the world, implying, that he would in time recover it by the promised seed. A smell is here attributed to God by an *'Αρωποπαθεία*. As good scents recreate and refresh the sense of a man, so did the sacrifice of Christ please and content God. Our sins had sent up an ill savour to heaven, had disturbed the rest of God. Christ expels our ill scent by the perfume of his blood, and restores a sweet savour in the heavenly places: Heb. ix. 23, 'purifying the heavenly things' himself. God being a pure Spirit, could not be taken with the smoke of the legal lambs, nor refreshed with the fumes of incense; but both God and believers under the Old Testament had a content in them, as they were shadows of this sweet sacrifice which was intended for the appeasing God, and securing the offending creature. What the legal sacrifices could not perform, as being earthy, mean, and too low for the acceptation of God, and delighted him no otherwise than as they referred to Christ, that this sweet sacrifice of the unblemished Lamb of God, possessed with a perfect love both to God's glory and man's safety, performed, and sent up such a fragraney to the nostrils of God, that he approved both of the priest and the sacrifice, infinitely above the best sacrificers and sacrifices under the law, and changed his countenance towards the filthy creature that had raised such noisome steams in his presence.

The things observable are many.

1. The love of Christ was the spring of his passion.
2. The person of Christ was consecrated for us, and given to us.

But the only things I shall take notice of are,

1. Christ was a voluntary sacrifice.
2. Christ was an efficacious sacrifice.

Doct. 1. The sacrifice and sufferings of Christ for us were free and voluntary. His offering was a free-will offering. It is expressed in the same chapter, Eph. v. 25, 'He gave himself for the church.' His voluntariness was typified by the paschal lamb, a lamb being the mildest of all creatures, resisting neither the shearers nor butchers, Isa. liii. 7. All his work is assigned to his love, Rev. i. 5, 6. His love was antecedent to his shedding his blood, and our being washed in it. Love renders any work delightful. The Sun of righteousness hath not a less bridegroom spirit and cheerful disposition in running his humble race, than a sun in the heavens is expressed to have by the psamist, in running his natural race in the heavens, Ps. xix. 5. He was not made poor by force, but became so, and laid aside his own riches for our sakes, 2 Cor. viii. 9. He became destitute of the advantages other men enjoy,* that from his worldly poverty we might become rich in spiritual graces. He was not emptied of his glory by another, but made himself of no reputation; he took upon him the form of a servant, it was not imposed upon him by constraint; he was not debased by others, till he had humbled himself to the lowest degree of humility. He could have resisted them when they lifted him up upon the cross, but he would be obedient to the determination of his Father to the last gasp, Philip. ii. 7, 8. The hiding the majesty of God under 'the form of a servant,' his descent not only to the earth, the lowest dregs of the world, the footstool of the divinity, but to the most abject and forlorn condition in that earth; his taking the

* Amyraut in loc.

similitude of weak flesh, and running through all the degrees of reproaches and punishment, even to the grave itself, were voluntary acts, the workings of his love, that he might rescue us from a deserved hell, to advance us to an undeserved heaven, and make us partakers of that blessedness he had voluntarily quitted for our sakes. He willingly put himself into the condition of a servant, which is to be at the beck of another, and have no will but that of his master's. He submitted his reason and affections to God, to be employed in his work according to his will. He had an absolute power over his own body, John x. 18, yet he made a free offer of it, and subjected it to the penalty to be inflicted on him. One place more: John xvii. 19, 'For their sakes I sanctify myself;' it cannot be meant of his consecration to his office of priesthood, that depended upon the call of his Father; he was constituted a priest, not by his own intrusion, but the Father's election, settled by an oath. The Father, and not himself, glorified him in this regard, Heb. v. 4, 5. Nor of his habitual and inward holiness, for so he was sanctified by the Spirit in his conception, and filled with all graces, Luke i. 35, John iii. 34. But it is meant of his offering himself a sacrifice. His Father made him a priest, the Spirit made his human nature fit to be a sacrifice, his own will made him an actual offering.

In the handling this doctrine, I shall do these four things:

I. Lay down some propositions for explaining this.

II. The evidences of this voluntariness.

III. The necessity of it.

IV. The use.

I. Propositions for explaining it.

1. The Father's appointing him to be a sacrifice, doth not impair his own willingness in undertaking. The Father is said to send him and deliver him, John iii. 34, Rom. viii. 32; not that the Son was over-persuaded, or came only out of obedience, without any inclination of his own. The Father being the root and fountain of the deity, all actions are originally ascribed to him, though common to all; so he is first in order of being, as he is first in order of working. The Father is said to deliver him, because the first motion of redemption is supposed to arise from the will and motion of the Father; yet the love of Christ was the spring of all mediatory actions, and his taking our nature on him; and therefore he is no less said to give himself, than the Father is said to give him to us and for us. God is said to set him forth, Rom. iii. 25; yet he is said to come, Mat. xx. 28, not thrust out or forced to come. God lays our sins upon him, yet Christ is said to bear them. His engagement was an act of choice, liberty, and affection. He could not be constrained by his Father to undertake it; his will was as free in consenting, as his Father was in proposing. The Spirit is said to be sent by the Father and the Son, to take of Christ's and shew it to us, to fit those for heaven that are given to Christ; yet his distributions are according to his own will: 1 Cor. xii. 11, 'Dividing to every man according as he will.' If you consider Christ as one God with the Father, there is but one and the same will in both.* Will belongs to essence or nature; the essence of God being one, there are not in God divers wills, though the Godhead be in divers persons, because the power of willing is the nature, not a personal propriety. The decree of redemption was joint in Father and Son. What Christ decreed as God, he executed as man; and what he willed from eternity, he began in time to will as man.† Christ, as God, gave himself to death with the same will and by the same action as the Father gave him;

* Hooker's Polity, John x. 3 'I and my Father are one.'

† Bodius in Eph. v. 2.

but as man he gave himself by a will inspired by the Father.* Yet for our conception's sake the Scripture represents things so as if they were distinct wills, which yet we must not imagine, any more than because the Scripture, in condescension to our weakness, represents God with eyes, and ears, and hands, we must conceive God to have a fleshly body like ours.

2. The necessity of his death impeacheth not the voluntariness of it. Many things are voluntary which yet are necessary; there are voluntary necessities. God is necessarily yet voluntarily holy; the devils are necessarily yet voluntarily evil, it is not in their power to become good, yet they are carried to evil with a complete will. Man desires to be happy by a natural, and therefore necessary, inclination, yet willingly and without constraint. This death was necessary, by a determination of God; voluntary, by a cheerful submission of Christ. The election of the good angels rendered their standing necessary, but the adherence of their wills to God made their standing also voluntary. Grace did not force them against their will, nor God's determination of Christ render him a sacrifice against his mind.

(1.) It was voluntary in the foundation. The decree was not necessary, but an act of divine liberty. Nothing can incline God to an act of grace but his own most holy will. Christ being at liberty whether he would espouse our interest or no, his undertaking to manage it was a pure voluntary act, arising from his own will. He was not bound to become a creature, and take upon him the form of a servant, but his entering into that condition was an act of free choice and condescension. No reason can possibly be supposed why the Son of God, and Lord of the creation, should make himself lower than the angels for us, by any necessity of his own condition. There was indeed a necessity for us, who could not be redeemed without him, but no necessity arising from the divine nature. If a creature ready to be famished be in a place where there is only one person of ability and sufficiency to relieve him, there is a necessity on the part of the poor creature to be relieved, and relieved by that person, since there is no other to help him, but there is no necessity on the part of the sufficient person to relieve him; the help he affords him will be a mere act of charity. This act of Christ is therefore called grace: 2 Cor. viii. 9, 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he were rich, yet for our sakes he became poor;' nothing could move him to become either a creature or a servant in a created state, but the yearnings of his own bowels towards fallen and miserable man.

(2.) It was necessary after this engagement. His engagement to make himself liable to punishment in our stead was free, but when he had entered into bonds to the Judge of heaven and earth, he was then in his power to be delivered up to death, according to that obligation which he subscribed and consented to; he was then legally, and by his own consent, bound to perform what he had undertaken, and could not justly detract. The promises of Christ are without repentance, as well as the gifts of God. After Christ had put himself into the state of a creature, and form of a servant, the homage due from a creature to God, and the work of a servant after his ear was bored, was necessary, and could not be refused by him. He had then broke his word passed to his Father in the covenant of redemption, had he absolutely declined it. He ought to die as Christ, Luke xxiv. 46, *i. e.* as clothed with our nature for such an end. He needed not to die, as he was the Son of God by eternal generation, and lay in the bosom of his Father; but it was necessary as he was made under the law, made Christ, *i. e.* anointed to such a purpose. It was necessary, also, in regard of the truth of God laid to pawn in several promises, prophecies, and legal representations; but still

* Aquin. sum part. iii. qu. 47, part. 3.

the fountain of all this was the free bubbling up of infinite affection to mankind. Yet this necessity was a necessity of immutability, not of constraint. The holy and unchangeable will which complied with the first proposal, remained in force till the first execution. The will of the eternal Spirit, whereby he offered himself to his Father, was immutable. It is a necessity arising from himself, and the perfection of his own nature; from his own holy will, not from any constraint. God cannot be constrained; liberty is so essential a property of the divine nature, that though it may determine itself, it cannot constrain itself. To be God is a term of infinite power, to be constrained is a term of impotency; these are contradictions in the Godhead. Besides, in his human nature he could not sin, he could not be overcome by the devil, he could find nothing in him as a foundation to stand upon,* John xiv. 30. He could not do anything against the Father. But to desert his suretyship had been contrary to that law to which he had subjected himself; the word of the oath, whereby he was constituted a priest, had been fruitless. It had been the utter ruin of all the gracious decrees of God, because all the elect were 'chosen in him,' Eph. i. 4, 5; the covenant with Abraham and the patriarchs had been null, the oath which he swore to them broken, Luke i. 73; and the foundation of their faith falling, the whole superstructure had been dissolved, and they would have believed God in vain. All this necessity is no plea against his willingness. The obligation which the truth of God lays upon him, after he hath promised, doth not diminish his first kindness and grace in making the promise. As the necessity of his death did not extenuate the Jews' sin in butchering him, so neither doth it lessen Christ's willingness in laying down his life after he had voluntarily entered into our bonds.

(3.) Though his death was violent in regard of man, yet this doth not abate the voluntariness in regard of himself. Judas betrayed him, the serjeants apprehended him, Pilate condemned him, and the soldiers crucified him. These were but instruments to execute 'the counsel of God,' Acts iv. 28; yet he need not have been apprehended unless he would; he shewed his power to escape, not only the united force of the Jewish nation, but of the whole world, by striking his apprehenders to the ground with the majesty of his looks. He that can rescue himself from the bands of men, and will not, may be said to die willingly, though he die violently. They slew him as murderers, and made him a sacrifice to their revenge, not to God, 'with wicked hands,' Acts ii. 23, and with wicked minds too. He was the sole offerer of himself, as it respected God and advantaged us. Judas willingly delivered him, Pilate with an imperfect will condemned him, the Jews delightfully reproached him, but the intention of none of them was to make him a sacrifice of redemption. It was 'for our sakes he sanctified himself,' John xvii. 19, but it was not for our sakes that the Jews butchered him. Judas delivered him for the silver, and Pilate condemned him to preserve his grandeur, but he delivered himself with an excessive affection for us. His murderers had no regard to the making him an expiation for the sin of the world; his oblation to God as a sacrifice was an act purely of his own will at the very time of his death, not of his enemies' rage. In this capacity his death was solely the fruit of his love, and the hovering of his soul over the lost sons of Adam; it did not arise from a necessity of nature, but the will of his mercy to us; he gave himself, and gave himself out of love, Gal. ii. 20; enemies did not give him, nature did not give him. The inward transports and affections of his soul, the actings of his choicest

* Cocc. de fæd. pp. 115, 116.

graces, whereby his offering was rendered acceptable to God, his murderers were not the cause of; they had not force enough to crucify him, had not a joy been set before him, which made him endure the cross, Heb. xii. 2, *i. e.* the things wherein he rejoiced, as those things are called our hope, which are the object of our hope. The joy of Christ, which made him despise the shame and ignominy of the cross, was the glorious good he should procure by his suffering, the expiation of sin, reconciliation of God, the new creation of the world; for the producing and ripening such fruits did he hang upon the tree. This gave him contentment and pleasure in the midst of his indignities, and this was increased, not impaired, by the fury of his enemies. Though his death, in regard of men, was violent, yet, as the death of a sacrifice, it was wholly voluntary.

(4.) When our Saviour seemed unwilling to it in the time of his agony, he was then highly willing. This was when he prayed earnestly that the cup might pass from him, and begins, John xii. 27, 'Father, save me from this hour.' The strugglings of innocent nature do both times end not only in a gracious submission to the will of God, but in an ardent desire that the will and glory of God might have their full accomplishment. 'But for this cause came I unto this hour,' therefore 'Father, glorify thy name;' do thy own work, and finish every part of thy will in me, and what thou hast appointed me to undergo. The state Christ was in must needs admit of some shrinkings in his nature, encompassed with our infirmities; he saw the comfortable influences of God suspended, the indignation of God for our sins breaking out, the guilt of innumerable iniquities imputed to him, and the law with all its curses edged against him, and himself left to bear the weight of all this, and conflict with a wrath no creature ever bore before. The apprehensions of all these, meeting in a clear understanding, could not but raise suitable passions of fear and trouble in his human nature. If he had not known the greatness of the punishment he was to endure for our redemption, he had undertaken to ransom us from he knew not what; if he had not feared it, he had not been a sensible man; if he had not trembled at it, he had not been an innocent man. Suitable affections to God in his carriage towards us are the necessary duties of a creature. God is the object of fear in his vindictive justice, which Christ then was to be subject to. It had not consisted with that reverence which Christ always showed to God, not to be sensible of the sharpness of those punishments which were then providing for him as a substituted criminal in our stead. Though the person of our Saviour was but one, yet he, having two natures, had two wills, a divine and human, otherwise he were not God and man. If he had not a human soul, he were not a man; and if he had not a human will, he had not a human soul. As he truly took our nature, so he took the laws of it, whereby it cannot affect pain, but shuns whatsoever it apprehends hurtful to it. As death was an evil against nature, he desires to decline it; as it was to be an atonement for sin, and appeasing of wrath through the dignity of the sacrifice, he desires to undergo it; he regarded it as man, and so had some reluctance to it; he regarded it as a man designed for such an end, and therefore submitted to it. 'But for this cause came I unto this hour.' As it was a dissolution of nature, a fruit of God's displeasure against sin, and should for a time exclude his soul and body from the fruition of the divine favour and glory (though the personal union should not be dissolved), he startled at it; for the more Christ loved the sense of the divine love which he enjoyed in his life, the more grievous would the apprehension of the want thereof be.* But when he considered that he was united to that nature,

* Bilson's survey, p. 398.

that he might suffer in it, and lay it down as a sacrifice to that justice which brandished a naked sword against man, that without it the world could not be freed from that misery sin had hurled it into, he then put his neck under the cross; as a patient who, considering the potion offered as bitter, abhors it,* but remembering the intention of the physician, and the beneficial qualities of the medicine, doth readily accept it. Both the abhorreny and acceptance are acts of the same will upon divers considerations, or rather the abhorreny is an act of nature regarding it as distasteful, the acceptance is an act of reason regarding it as wholesome. Now, was not the will of Christ as mediator as victorious in the issue over the reluctance as it had been in the capacity of a man desirous of the removal of the cup? The human will veils the divine will, and conforms itself not only in a quiet posture to the resolves of God, but in an ardent desire that his will might be performed. There was more of obedience in 'Thy will be done, not mine,' and more of ardent affections in 'Father, glorify thyself,' than there was of reluctancy in 'Let this cup pass from me,' or 'Save me from this hour.' He disclaims the will of his human nature, to perform the will of his Father's mercy.

2. Wherein this voluntariness of Christ's death appears.

(1.) He willingly offered himself in the first counsel about redemption to stand in our stead. When our necks were upon the block, and the blow from justice was otherwise unavoidable, Christ steps in, diverts the blow from us to himself, and declares himself willing to suffer what we had merited, that we might escape upon that suffering. The Father proposed it, the Son consented to it. The will of God is antecedent to the consent of Christ: Ps. xl. 7, 'I come to do thy will, O my God,' which will was the will of God for our sanctification, 'through the offering of the body of Christ,' Heb. x. 10. Though he knew every thorn in the way he was to pass, the greatness of the wrath he was to undergo; yet his heart leapt into the Father's arms with a full and ready consent at the first overture. The Father proposed it not with more affection than the Son entertained it with delight: 'I delight to do thy will, O my God.' He was loath to leave expressing it: 'I come;' that is not all, 'I delight to do thy will;' nor doth it rest there, 'Thy law is within my heart.' It is so settled that it cannot be rooted out but with the utter dissolution of my heart. Thus, 'in the volume,' or the beginning 'of the book, it is written of him.' In the book of Genesis, in the first promise, the second person in the Trinity (who is supposed to appear to our first parents after the fall) represents himself a suffering Saviour, and testifies his own consent to the suffering he was to undergo, as the seed of the woman, by having his heel bruised by the serpent, and the victory he was to obtain by breaking the serpent's head. When the counsel was resolved upon, Christ is said to 'delight in the habitable parts of the earth,' Prov. viii. 31. His consent was past before the world was; it was a delight to him, because of the glory of God's grace, to be made illustrious in the sacrifice of himself. It cannot be meant of the first creation, for that is supposed, and there could be no exulting delight in that, since the defilement of it by sin presently succeeded the laying on the top-stone. It is meant, therefore, of the restoration of the world, which was to be brought by this wisdom of God. Some, to invalidate the deity of Christ, understand by Wisdom in that book and chapter, an intellectual habit, which is ridiculous. The antiquity of the Wisdom here spoken of is 'before the mountains were settled, and before there were any fountains abounding with water.' The Wisdom here described was present 'with God' when he made the world. It was entirely

* Donne, vol. i. p. 129.

familiar with him ; there was such a familiarity between God and Wisdom as between a father and a son : ver. 30, 'I was by him as one brought up with him,' and peculiarly the delight of God.

(2.) The whole course of his life manifests this willingness. His will stood right to this point of the compass all his life. He never had any defect in his understanding, nor did his memory of what was appointed for him ever fail him. In the time of his life he frequently mentioned the tragedy to be acted upon him, the manner of his death by lifting up on the cross, John iii. 14 ; and he who was intimately acquainted with the prophets knew every circumstance of his death predicted in them. Many enter the lists with difficulties out of ignorance, but the willingness of our Saviour cannot be ascribed either to ignorance or forgetfulness. He knew long before that Judas was to betray him, before such a design entered into Judas his heart, John vi. 64, yet cashiered him not from his family. He foretold the hour of his death ; his desires were strong for it ; he was straitened till he was baptized with that bloody baptism, Luke xii. 50. He had little ease in his own bowels, as though it were a kind of death to him not to be a sacrifice ; and when Peter would have dissuaded him from suffering, he useth him as smartly as he would have done the devil : Mat. xvi. 23, 'Get thee behind me, Satan,' implying that in that speech he was the same enemy, by giving him the same title. And the night before, he doth solemnly oblige himself to suffer by his deed,* as well as he had before by his word ; he makes his testament in the institution of the supper, and delivers his will into the hands of his disciples. His heart was bent to wade through it ; he gave them his blood in the sacrament, to shew how freely he would pour it forth the following day in a sacrifice. The free distribution of his body to them represented the free offering up his body for them.

(3.) At the time of his death he manifested this voluntariness in his whole carriage. When the time drew near, he declined it not ; he would enter Jerusalem with *Hosannas*, as if when he went to his death he went to his triumph ; and indeed it was so, for by that oblation of himself upon the cross, he 'triumphed over principalities and powers,' Col. ii. 15. He went into the garden, which was as it were the bringing himself to the door of the tabernacle to be offered to God.† He had at the passover bid Judas to execute quickly his traitorous intention, and now quickens the high priest's dull officers to apprehend him, when he told them twice himself was the person they sought. He summoned not one angel to take arms for his rescue, though he could have commanded legions to attend him ; but as he had rebuked Peter before for dissuading him, he now rebukes him for defending him ; moved thereto by an ardency of zeal to drink the cup : John xviii. 11, 'Shall I not drink of the cup which my Father hath given me ?' He would not court the protection of Herod by working a miracle to please his curiosity. As he would have no relencings himself, so he would not endure them in others ; and therefore dissuades the women from expressing their natural affection in a few tears, Luke xxiii. 28. His soul was not wrung and torn from him, but he rendered his spirit into the hands of his Father, and cried with a loud voice before that last act ; so that he died not by a defect of strength, but by an ardency of will. He was more delighted with his sufferings for us than we can be with the greatest worldly pleasures and grandeurs, and valued reproaches for us above the empire of the world. To conclude, his soul was not torn from him, but he 'poured it out,' Isa. liii. 12, even that which was dearest to him, as a man doth water, freely and willingly out

* Lingend, Eucharist, p. 22.

† Dr Owen.

of the vessel, 'he poured out his soul unto death;' he ordered death to come and fetch it.

III. Thing. * Why this voluntariness was necessary.

1. On the part of the person.

2. On the part of justice.

3. On the part of acceptance.

1. On the part of the sacrifice itself. He was above any obligation to that work he so freely undertook for us. When he made himself of no reputation, it was a work of his charity, not of necessity; and he was bound in no other bonds but those of his own love. Nor could he be overruled to anything against his own consent; for being 'God equal with the Father,' Philip. ii. 6, he was subject to no law, nor could be constrained to bend under the terms and penalties of it. Christ as the second person was not under a law any more than the Father; for he was 'in the form of God,' *i. e.* had the same essence with God. Suppose he had been incarnate without entering into any bonds for us, though so far as he was man he was bound actively to obey the precepts of the law, yet not bound to endure the penalties of the law, unless he had been a transgressor of the precept: he was to have obeyed it as a creature, but not suffer the curse, unless he had been a guilty creature. But he was not only made under the law, as an innocent creature, but 'in the likeness of sinful flesh,' Rom. viii. 3, as like as possible could be, sin only excepted; and therefore observed those ceremonial precepts which concerned creatures as sinful: as circumcision, though he had no lust in his human nature to be cut off, and baptism, though he had no stain to be washed away. And indeed, as he was not, so he could not be a transgressor, being secured by his conception from any original taint, and by the hypostatical union from any actual spot. If he could possibly have been a transgressor, the salvation of the elect had been contingent. Being a creature, of the seed of the woman, he may be supposed to be under the condition of the covenant of nature; yet not violating that covenant, he could not justly die for himself.

2. Necessary on the part of justice. The satisfaction for sin was to be made by death, because man upon his revolt from God was, by the immutable law, bound over to death. Man could not satisfy the law but by death, and so must have lain under the bonds of that death for ever, and no convenient way could be found for his rescue, unless some one, who was not obnoxious to that penalty by nature, should suffer in his stead that death which he owed. Now had it not been an injustice to inflict a punishment upon a person purely innocent, and unwilling to render himself in the place of the criminal? No man can be justly constrained to pay either a pecuniary or criminal debt for another without his own consent, either actual, at the time of paying or suffering; or legal, when entering into the same bonds, he hath made himself legally one person with the debtor or offender. Had not Christ voluntarily undertaken it, justice had been wronged instead of being satisfied. It could upon no account have been just to punish one that had not been guilty upon his own score, or by substitution. The satisfaction of justice in one kind had been an injury to it in another. Well then, the will of Christ could not have saved us without his suffering; because, as the law had denounced death, justice was to be satisfied by death. Nor could the sufferings of Christ have saved us without his will, for none can be an involuntary surety; had he not consented to have our sins imputed to him, the punishment of our sins could not have been inflicted on him. To take from any what is not due, and when they are unwilling to part with it, is rapine.

3. Necessary in regard of acceptance. Christ's consent was as necessary

as God's order. Had Christ suffered for us without the consent of his Father, the judge of the world, though his sufferings had been of infinite value, because of the dignity of his person, yet God had not been obliged to look upon us as concerned in him,* nor count him* to us or for us; and had not Christ consented that they should be for us, they could not justly have been accepted for us, or applied to us. It had been an alienating the goods against the will of the donor. As God's order makes his sacrifice capable of being satisfactory, so the consent of Christ makes it capable of being accepted for us and applied to us. The heathens would not offer a beast that came struggling to the altar; but God, under the law, regarded not the reluctance of the sacrifice, but the free will of the offerer, which was necessary to make the sacrifice a sweet savour. How much more necessary is the voluntariness of that person who was to be both sacrifice and priest! Love belongs to the integrity of a sacrifice; a burnt body without charity is of no value, 1 Cor. xiii. 3. The merit of his death depended, not upon the act of dying, or the penal part in that death, but upon his willing obedience in it, in conjunction with the dignity of his person; and without this his soul might have expired without being a sacrifice. As the disobedience of Adam rendered the world obnoxious to wrath, so by the voluntary oblation of Christ, justification is conferred upon believers, Rom. v. 19. His love made his sacrifice a sweet-smelling savour. By the pouring out his soul is our redemption wrought; Isa. liii. 12, 'He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul unto death,' or he shall partake of the spoil with the strong; he shall take us as his own spoils, who were before the devil's prey, and restore to us that blessedness which the devil rifled us of. We are restored, and himself exalted, not merely because he died, but because he died willingly. In vain had we hoped for the benefit of a forced redemption.†

IV. Use.

1. The way of redemption by a sacrifice was necessary. Why should Christ so willingly undertake this task, be a man of sorrows, lay himself down into the grave, if the atonement of our sins could have been procured at an easier rate? He that made the world by a word would have redeemed us by a word, if it had stood with his own honour. It is at least necessary for God's greater honour and man's surer benefit. The application of it to us must be as necessary as the oblation of it for us. Think not a few tears, the heat-drops of a natural repentance, can expiate those sins for which Christ thought the best blood in his heart so necessary to be shed.

2. The death of Christ for us was most just on the part of God. What Christ did willingly submit to, God might justly charge upon him as a due debt. *Volenti non fit injuria*. That man that will enter into bond to secure the debt to the creditor, or satisfy for the criminal to the governor, may justly be sued upon default of payment by the one, and arrested for default of appearance by the other; what he promised may justly be demanded of him.

3. How wonderful was the love of Christ! To accept so willingly of such hard conditions for us, and die so ignominiously upon the cross we had deserved! He knew the burden of sin, he knew the terrors of hell; yet he did not shrink from the imputation of the one, or the sufferings of the other. It was not a willingness founded upon ignorance, but upon a clear-sighted affection. He was willing to be reproached, that we might be glorified; he would be like to us, that we might be conformed to him; and took our human nature, that we might in a sort partake of his divine. Oh wonderful love! to open his breast to receive into his own heart the sharp edge of that sword which was directed against us. Had not his feet been well shod with love,

* Qu. 'them'?—Ed.

† Hall, vol. ii. p. 246.

he would soon have turned back, and said his way was unpassable.* A courtesy is enhanced by the greater ingrency of the will in it; our Saviour had a double will in this matter, the will of the divine, and the will of his human nature, like two streams from distant parts meeting together in conjunction. Worse than devils are we, if we are not ravished with so great an affection, which made him leave the heaven of his Father's presence for a time, to pass through our hell in the dregs of the creation.

4. How willingly then should we part with our sins for Christ, and do our duty to him! Oh that we could in our measures part as willingly with our lusts as he did with his blood! He parted with his blood when he needed not, and shall not we with our sins, when we ought to do so for our own safety, as well as for his glory? Since Christ came to redeem us from the slavery of the devil, and strike off the chains of captivity, he that will remain in them, when Christ with so much pains and affection hath shed his blood to unloose them, prefers the devil and sin before a Saviour, and will find the affront to be aggravated by the Redeemer's voluntariness in suffering for his liberty. How willingly should we obey him, who so willingly obeyed God for us! Christ did not let his enemies snatch away his life, but laid it down; our duties should not be wrung from us, but gently distil from us. The more will in sin, the blacker; the more will in obedience, the sweeter. It is in this we should imitate our great pattern.

* Gurnal's Armour, part ii. p. 444.

A DISCOURSE OF THE ACCEPTABLENESS OF CHRIST'S DEATH.

A sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.—EPH. V. 2.

HAVING despatched the first doctrine about the voluntariness of Christ's death, from those words, *hath given himself*, I proceed to speak of the acceptableness of it, from this latter clause of the verse. Allusion is made here to the perfume God commanded under the law, Exod. xxx. 34. The spices were to be pounded, and afterwards put into a censer, to be dissolved into a sweet fume in the Levitical service; Christ was bruised by his humiliation, to be rendered a sweet perfume to God.

Doct. The sacrifice of Christ was acceptable to God, and efficacious for men. There was a complete satisfaction made to God, the supreme Judge offended, pleasing to him, and effectual to free the guilty party from the obligation to the deserved punishment. Christ was white, in regard of his innocence; ruddy, in regard of his bloody passion: both put together made him the chiefest among ten thousand, Cant. v. 10. The efficacy of this sacrifice in many fruits of it is fully expressed, Dan. ix. 24. The transgression was finished, an end put to sin, the apostasy of Adam was checked, the idolatry of the Gentiles overthrown, the atonement of sin made, which could not be by the legal sacrifices; a righteousness pleasing to God, and therefore everlasting, introduced; all the predictions of him fulfilled; whereupon he is anointed, *i. e.* fully settled in all his offices, and declared by that anointing to be a complete sacrifice, and the Prince of our salvation. The last words our Saviour spake upon the cross gave us an assurance of this; he saw and knew the work completely performed, and then gave up the ghost: John xix. 30, 'When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished; and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.' All the prophecies of what I was to do are accomplished; I have nothing else now to do, to render my undertaking complete, but the bowing down my head, and sending out my last breath to my Father. All the sacrifices of the law, the daily and anniversary sacrifices, were shadows and images of him, and fulfilled in their main design in and by him. It could not be otherwise than acceptable, since there was no omission of anything required of him, no commission of anything forbidden to him. The whole law, both the mediatory law and the law of nature, were within his heart; the whole law was answered by

his life. He paid an obedience, not by measure, as he had received the Spirit not by measure, to prepare him to be a victim for our redemption. It was acceptable to God for us; so must the apostle be understood. It was a sweet savour to God for those persons, and those ends for which he gave himself. As it was a sacrifice intended and offered to God for us, so it was accepted as a sweet-smelling savour by God for those persons and ends.

In handling this doctrine, I shall,

I. Premise two things for the explication of it.

II. Prove it.

III. Apply it.

I. I shall premise two things for the explication of it.

1. God was not absolutely bound to accept it for us. Though this sacrifice was infinitely valuable in itself, and had it been without a divine order, might have been counted a testimony of affection to the honour of God and the good of the creature, yet God might have refused any acceptance of it for us; he might have rejected every sacrifice but that of the offender. If we consider it simply in itself, without any previous order, without any covenant struck between the Father and the Son concerning it, he was not obliged to have any respect to the apostate creature upon the account of it. But after a covenant struck between them, wherein it was agreed that Christ should lay down his soul as a ransom, and offer himself an unblemished sacrifice for the sons of men, and that he should see the travail of his soul, and by his righteousness justify many, after he had 'borne their iniquities in his own body on the tree,' Isa. liii. 10, 11, God could not but accept it, unless he could have found a spot in the offering, and charged him with a non-performance of any article covenanted between them. If it were according to the tenor of the covenant of redemption, it could not be refused by God, being consequent to his decree and promise. But if we consider it in itself, God was not bound to accept it for us, though he might have had an high esteem of it; for, according to the tenor of his law, he might have demanded a compensation from the person of the sinner, and laid the punishment upon the person upon whom he found the guilt, and exacted the life of the sinner as a sacrifice for the sin. The acceptableness of this sacrifice was from itself, in regard of the dignity of the person, the infiniteness of the sacrifice; but the actual acceptation of it for us was from the covenant and agreement between them. When a man offers to give a thousand pound for that which is not worth a thousand pence, the sum is not only a valuable, but an over-valuable consideration for that which is desired; but the acceptation of this sum from the other depends upon the will of the person whose propriety it is. The death of Christ was a sacrifice of a valuable consideration for the sin of the world, and sufficient to expiate the greatest crimes both for number and weight; but the receiving of it upon such an account depended upon the will of the Law-giver, whose authority was violated in the breach of the law, and who, as the only Judge, had passed sentence on the offending creatures, and had 'concluded all under sin,' Rom. xi. 32, and sentenced the whole world (*ὑπὸ δίκην*) 'under condemnation,' Rom. iii. 19. It must be accepted by him; it had not else been of itself valid for us. In regard, therefore, of the valuableness of this sacrifice, all the beneficial fruits of it streaming upon the creature are in Scripture ascribed to the death of Christ; but in regard of God's acceptation of it for us, they are ascribed to the grace of God; to the grace of God, as appointing and accepting; to the death of Christ, as procuring and purchasing. The grace of God gave a virtue to the mediation of Christ, in regard of its application to us; but the

death of Christ had a value in itself, whether it had been accepted for us or not, or ordered by God to be applied to us. And as God respects the agreement in the promise he makes to us, so Christ doth not enter any pleas in respect of the intrinsic worth of his blood, but makes this agreement the foundation of them: John xvii. 4-6, 'I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.' The prevalency of it for us depended upon God's order. Indeed, had he not finished the work, he could not have challenged the reward promised; there was to be merit on his part before a reward on God's. Yet the suffering on his part may be conceived without any reward on God's part, if considered separate from this agreement and divine transaction between them. We must not understand this as though, if God had not been obliged to dignify Christ for his sufferings, by the promise he had made him, he would not have rewarded those sufferings out of mere goodness; for since God in his own nature is infinitely good, he cannot but love holiness and affection to him, and testify his approbation of it by some retribution.

2. As the acceptation of it depended upon the will of the Lawgiver and Rector, so the acceptableness of it depended upon the will of the Redeemer. The apostle therefore saith, 'He gave himself for us;' the sweetness of it depended upon the will of the donor, in concurrence with the will of God. The more of will there is in any act of a creature's obedience, the more savoury it is to the divine Majesty to whom it is paid. His love both to God and us made his sacrifice a sweet-smelling savour. The merit of his death depended not upon his mere dying, or upon the penal part in that death, but upon his willing obedience in it, in conjunction with the dignity of his person; without this, he might have breathed out his soul without being a victim. Had not Christ's will been full and firm in it, that his sufferings should be for us, they could not justly have been accepted for us, or applied to us; it could not have been a payment of our debt, and the application of him to us had been an alienating the goods of another against the will of the proprietor. This sweet savour exhaled from his voluntariness; he was not dragged to his sufferings, but suffered more willingly than we had greedily sinned against God. We had conscience checking us in sinning, but Christ had no conscience checking him in suffering; it was his meat and drink to do his Father's will. As God's order makes his sacrifice capable of being satisfactory, so the free willingness of Christ makes it capable of being accepted for us, and applied to us. Involuntary services are rather passions than actions; in them we rather suffer a service than perform it. There was obedience in every preparatory act of Christ: obedience in the last act, in the suffering death; and it was his obedience in suffering, not simply the suffering itself, made it meritorious of his mediatory glory for us: Philip. ii. 8, 9, 'Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him,' viz. because of his 'obedience to the death of the cross.' His joy in performing was the incentive of God's joy in valuing, accepting, and rewarding it. God eyed his obedience in the crown he gave him, and it was in the consideration of his obedience in suffering that he advanced him to that excellent dignity.

II. Thing. That this sacrifice is acceptable to God and efficacious for us will appear in several propositions.

1. God took pleasure in the designment and expectation of it.

(1.) His eternal delights were in him, not only as his Son, but as a Redeemer. God's delight in Christ, and Christ's rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and delighting in the sons of men, are coupled together, Prov. viii. 30, 31, as if God delighted in him because he delighted in the

redemption of man. Hence God is introduced as speaking with a kind of joy of this ransom : Job xxxiii. 24, ' Then is he gracious to him, and saith, Deliver him from going down into the pit, I have found a ransom ; ' *i. e.* I have accepted a ransom, and have a price in my hand ; as Hos. xii. 8, ' I am become rich, I have found me out substance ; ' *i. e.* I have got wealth enough ; so I have here price sufficient, unloose the chains of the prisoner. This finding is the same on God's part with acceptation, as finding on Christ's part is the same with obtaining : Heb. ix. 12, ' Having obtained eternal redemption, ' *εὐράμενος*, having found. It is the speech of God ; who else but the Rector of the world, and the Judge of all flesh, hath power to order the delivery of the captive ? It is the exultation of his mercy at the appearance of a sufficient sacrifice for the forlorn sinner, whose soul was drawing near to the grave, and his life to the destroyers. It is the triumph of mercy at the thought of it.

(2.) What was the ground of his promises to him, but his pleasure in him for this undertaking ? What else can be the meaning of those words, which the apostle cites to prove the deity of Christ : Heb. i. 5, ' And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son ; ' that God would be always to him a Father, accepting his obedience, and he should always be a Son, offering upon the cross, or pleading upon the throne, his sacrifice and sufferings ; a Father to him as mediator, to countenance, encourage, accept him and all his undertakings ? This is a promise made to Christ. What need of any promises to Christ, considered only as the Son of God, equal with the Father ? It is a promise to Christ as the seed of David (the place the apostle cites it from is 2 Sam. vii. 14) ; and if to him as the seed of David, it is made to him as mediator, promising a kingdom to him upon his suffering, and an eternal acceptation of him as an obedient Son, the ground whereof was his purging our sins by himself, Heb. i. 3. All the promises of God to Christ respect not Christ absolutely considered as the Son of God, but in the relation of mediator, sacrifice, ransom for man ; for they are all branches issuing upon that first promise to man in paradise of the seed of the woman, whose heel was to be bruised. God promiseth to be a Father to Christ, in the same sense that Christ owns him to be his God and his Father after his resurrection, John xx. 17, which respects God's relation to him as mediator ; for as he is considered absolutely as the Son of God, God could not so properly be said to be his God. The term implies a covenant between them, in pursuance of which Christ was to be God's servant ; and in acceptance of this, God was the God of Christ, and promises to be his Father, manifesting his fatherly and gracious acceptance of his services, as a father doth the obedience of a son ; and therefore Christ pleads the righteousness of God for the obtaining the accomplishment of his grace in those that believe in him, as well as the love which God bore to him as mediator : John xvii. 25, 26, ' O righteous Father, ' &c. Grace was the fountain of the promise, but justice is obliged for the performance.

(3.) Hence it was that he declared his acceptation of him at his entrance into his office, which was at his baptism : Mat. iii. 17, ' This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ; ' not respecting only his eternal filiation, but the work he was entering into the exercise of, and the preparations to his being a sacrifice. With this work, wherein his Son was to glorify him, was he well pleased ; his interposition as a victim for the salvation of many brethren was grateful to God. The word *רצוה*, the word in Isa. xlii., whence this place is cited, is often used to express God's pleasure in, and acceptance of, sacrifices offered to him ' according to his will, ' as Job. xxxiii. 26, Mal. i. 8 ; and here it refers to the whole work of Christ, as the whole work of redemption

is called the good pleasure or *εὐδοκία* of God, Eph. i. 5. He confirms here by his own testimony what he had declared before by the angels in their hymn, Luke ii. 14, 'good will toward men,' *εὐδοκία*. So certain was God that this sacrifice would answer all his ends, that he testifies himself well pleased with him before the full performance of his work.

(4.) Hence it was that God delighted to bruise him, and in the thoughts of it he foresaw what pleasure he should take in this, as I may say, aromatic sacrifice, after it was bruised and pounded, Isa. liii. 10. Not that God did delight in the act of bruising, considered separately from the ends for which he bruised him (since all acts of justice are his strange works), but with an eye to the issue of it, which was the glory of his divine perfections, the recovery of lost man, the restoration of the health and soundness of the creation. As the physician delights not in the sharpness of the physic he administers to the patient, or a chirurgeon in lancing the body, but as it conduceth to the health of the patient.

(5.) Hence it was that he took pleasure in the representations of it before it was actually offered. Hence the very first service after the promise was probably a sacrifice, as hath been said before, and the chief part of worship in the only church God had in the world for many ages consisted in sacrifices, the representations of this grand victim in the end of the world. In all those things, which could not upon their own account satisfy God, as not being suited to his justice and wisdom, and not able to expiate the sin of a rational creature, he smelt a sweet savour as they were images of this sacrifice, whence the greatest and most pleasant fragranciness should be exhaled, Gen. viii. 20.

All this pleasure of God testified before the oblation was from the certainty of its accomplishment. God knew he 'laid help upon one that was mighty,' Ps. lxxxix. 19, mighty to please him and pleasure us. God could not have beforehand rejoiced in that which should have come short of his expectation; it is inconsistent with the Deity to have such a disappointment. The least failure in the sacrifice would have frustrated his contrivance, and rendered it as loathsome to God as the sin of Adam for which he suffered. But it was impossible for God to be disappointed, and impossible for the Redeemer, being God as well as man, to fail in the performance of his part, and thereby God come short of his satisfaction, and the sinner of the security.

2. God had a restoration of his rest, which had been disturbed by the entrance of sin, and therefore this sacrifice was highly acceptable to God. He was God's servant in whom his soul delighted or had a rest, Isa. xlii. 1; excluding all other things from contributing to the rest or delight of God. God rested in the works of creation as they were shadows of his wisdom, power, and greatness, especially as they were effluxes of his goodness, and answered his glorious ends; for the ground of his resting was a review of the goodness of them according to his own mind and idea. He saw himself and his attributes glittering in the creatures. But the rest of God was disturbed by the invasion sin made upon his rights in the world; and no sooner had he made the world and was refreshed, Exod. xxxi. 17, but disorder and confusion, by means of sin, spread itself over that frame, whereupon he cursed the earth which he had newly made, gave sentence against man, and though it was tempered with the mercy of a gracious promise, yet he left him under some outward penal evil all his days because of his revolt, and had no rest but in that seed of the woman, whose heel was to be bruised by the serpent, that the serpent's head might be shattered and bruised by him; and thereby an end put to that disorder which had entered by the serpent's breath. And therefore all the joy God hath in his church, the best part of his creation, is from this rest or acquiescence in his love or the object of his love, Zeph.

iii. 17, 'He will rest in his love, he will rejoice over thee with singing.' Hence it is that the temple, the type of Christ, is called in regard of those shadows of him, viz. sacrifices daily performed in it, 'the house of his glory,' Isa. lx. 7, 'a glorious high throne,' Jer. xvii. 12, 'the place of his rest,' Isa. lxvi. 1. Could gold and silver, polished stones, and artificial structures, be the rest and throne of God? As little as the blood of bulls and goats could affect him of themselves with a fragrant smell. His sole acquiescence was in the temple of the body of Christ, made fit to be a sacrifice, and represented by those types. Such a rest he had in him as a sacrifice, that upon that very account he gave all things into his hands; and as by eternal generation he had communicated to him the perfections of his nature, so, as he was a mediatory sacrifice, he gave him authority to execute judgment, gave him a kingdom as large as his own, and seemed to veil his own authority to increase his, and as it were stands behind the curtain, while this our Mordecai, that saved us from death, manages all the concerns of his empire; and all to this end, 'that men might honour the Son as they honoured the Father,' John v. 22, 23. Such a perfect acquiescence hath God in him, that he will entertain nothing to the prejudice of the honour of Christ in his work. He will not have the best works and sacrifices of men partners and competitors with him: he will for ever discard all those that have not the same thoughts of him, the same satisfaction and glorious rest in him, according to their measures, as himself hath. No other sacrifice shall be of value with him for the atonement of sin; not a dram of mercy, not so much as to the quantity of the cooling virtue of a drop of water, can reasonably be expected by those that refresh not themselves with that sacrifice wherein God found so delightful a rest. Such a rest hath God in his sacrifice, that it shall be the matter of the praises of the saints to all eternity in heaven.

3. The highest perfections of God's nature had a peculiar glory from this sacrifice. All his perfections, not discovered before to the sons of men, are glorified punctually according to his intentions and resolves for their discovery. Not a tittle of his nature which was to be made known to the sons of men, but is unveiled in this sacrifice to their view in a greater glory than the creatures were able to exhibit him. The 'knowledge of the glory of God shines in the face' or appearance 'of Jesus Christ,' 2 Cor. iv. 6; *i. e.* all the perfections of his nature are delineated in this saving sacrifice. In which respect some think that Col. ii. 9, of the 'fulness of the Godhead's dwelling in him bodily,' is to be taken not only that the Deity dwelt in the human nature, but the full discovery of the perfections of the Godhead was in the appearance of Christ in his body, as prepared for a sacrifice, as in a map and scheme, as clear as could possibly be represented to the view of men. It is in the purchase of our redemption by his blood that he appears to be 'the image of the invisible God,' as well as the 'first-born' or head 'of every creature,' Col. i. 14, 15; the image of those perfections of the Godhead which otherwise had been utterly invisible to man; the image not of his will, as the Socinians, but of his nature. Hence is the glory of the Lord, as well as the salvation of his people, the name and title of Christ, Isa. xl. 5: 'The glory of the Lord shall be revealed,' Luke ii. 32. His holiness was glorified in the discovery of the hellish filthiness of sin; his justice in the grievous punishment of it; his mercy to his creatures in giving the dearest thing he had a ransom for them. In him he appeared gracious as well as righteous, transcendently merciful in the exercise of the highest justice, Ps. cxvi. 5: both shined clearly in the head of this sacrifice, being tempered for the glory of God, and the good of the creature. The seat of justice is turned into a throne of grace, puts on the quality of an advocate instead of that of an

accuser, uttering absolutions instead of condemnations. Since justice is propitiated by the death of Christ, it steps in as an agent in the justification of a believer, Rom. iii. 25, 26. Justice, the main attribute to be dreaded by man, was so glorified and pleased by this sacrifice, that this alone would oblige him to the remission of sin, if mercy should not have any suit for itself.

4. Compare this sacrifice with the evil for which he was sacrificed, and which had invaded the rights of God, and the sweet savour of it will appear, as also the efficacy of it.

(1.) This sacrifice was as honourable for God as our sins had been a dishonour to him. As much glory accrued to him by it as injury was offered him by our sin. Our sin was the sin of a creature, and the sacrifice was the act of that person by whom God made the world. The sin was the act of his creature-image, the sacrifice was the act of the 'express image of his person,' Heb. i. 2, 3. Sin was committed by man, and expiated by him who was God. It was not only a rational sacrifice for the sin of a rational creature, but a divine. The sin was an infinite offence in regard of the person against whom it was committed, the price was of an infinite value in regard of the person by whom it was paid; the dignity of the person makes a compensation for the malice of the crime. An infinite person was not more wronged by the transgression than he is righted by the dignity of the person who made the compensation for it. It is every way proportioned to the infinite guilt of the crimes for which it is offered, and the infinite justice of God which was offended thereby. God had a price of a full value, he was fully repaired in his honour, and we delivered from our chains. In some respect the attributes of God were not so much dishonoured by the sin of Adam as they were glorified by the death of Christ. Christ glorified by his sacrifice those perfections which were not then discovered, nor discoverable to Adam in his innocence, as patience and grace, as well as those were particularly offended by the revolt of man. This sacrifice fully repairs the honour of God, which nothing else could do. The reason why the damned lie for ever under the weight of his wrath in hell is, because by all their suffering they cannot restore that honour to God, which they have robbed him of by their iniquities.

(2.) There was, therefore, a greater pleasure arose to God from this sacrifice than noisomeness from our sin. The dignity of the person suffering was equal to the dignity of the person injured, and infinitely exceeding the quality of the person offending. The sin of a creature could never be so filthy as the blood of the Son of God was holy; and the noisomeness of the first could not equal the sweetness of the latter. The stench of sin was not only balanced and tempered, but overpowered, by the sweetness of this sacrifice. Divine justice was not more incensed against the crime, than divine holiness was delighted with the offering. Sin was the sin of the human nature, the sacrifice was of the human nature in union with the divine, and offered up by an 'eternal Spirit,' Heb. ix. 14. The apostle in that text alludes to Gen. viii. 21. God smelled so sweet a savour from Noah's sacrifice, the type of this, that he resolves never more to curse the ground, or send deluge upon the new world, though he knew it would prove as bad as the old; for in the same breath wherein God's resolution is discovered to us, his sense of the evil of men's imaginations from their youth is declared also. The fragrant odour of the one was above the noisome scent of the other. Though our consciences are purged from dead works, which do morally pollute us, as the touch of a dead body did ceremonially pollute the Israelites, yet they are but partially purged here to serve the living God. There is not a service we offer but hath something mixed with it contrary to the holiness of God, yet the evil fumes that steam up with our sacrifices of duty, are overpowered by

the rich perfume of the sacrifice of the Son of God; that when for the foulness of our imperfections we deserve a repulse, yet for the sweetness of his sacrifice we find an acceptation. So much did the merit of his blood overcome the ill scent of our iniquities in the nostrils of God, that he cancels our bonds, which were due to him, and makes new ones of himself to Christ; he frees the creature from the deserved punishment, and obligeth himself to give eternal life to every one that believes in him thus sacrificed, howsoever noisome his sins were wherewith he had affronted heaven before.

(3.) Therefore it is efficacious for man, because so pleasing and sweet to God. Sin did not so much hurt to the transgressor, as this sacrifice procures good to the believer. Sin took away our spiritual life; Christ, by his sacrifice, procures a restoration of it in a fuller communication than before, John x. 10, a richer and more overflowing fountain than before, more abundantly than Adam in innocency, who had it mutable in his own hands, we immutable in the hands of our Head, who is our life; more abundantly than the patriarchs of the Old Testament, who had it in hope, and we in the full exhibition; a spiritual life more firm than Adam's, ending in an eternal life more durable. Therefore the grace of Christ surmounts the effects of Adam's sin. The apostle discourseth of the abundance of grace above the abundance of sin, Rom. v. 15-17. As Adam's sin barred paradise against him and his posterity, the blood of Christ, as oil to the lock, makes heaven's gates open easily for the re-admission of every believer.

5. His resurrection after his bloody sacrifice is a clear evidence of the sweetness of its savour with God, and its sufficiency for us. He was not totally swallowed up by divine justice, but surmounted all the strokes of it, and lifted up his head above the waves that surrounded him. The fetters of death had not been unlocked, if his sacrifice had not been satisfactory. The justice of God might as well have discharged him without any sacrifice at all, as discharged him upon an insufficient one. The freedom, therefore, of the prisoner from his chains, is an evidence of the full satisfaction of the debt, and the completeness of the sacrifice, since it is by that God, whose name hath that letter in it, 'By no means to clear the guilty,' Exod. xxxiv. 7, that the writ of execution was taken off: Isa. liii. 10, 'He was taken from prison and from judgment.' By whom? By him who only had authority to release him, who became a God of peace by his sacrifice, before he shewed himself a God of power in his resurrection, Heb. xiii. 20. He was appeased as an offended lawgiver, before he gave a judicial discharge as the supreme governor, unloosed the chains of death, sent an angel as his officer to unlock the prison doors, the grave, and set him at full liberty, no more to be arrested. There could be in this case no forcible breaking of prison, he being in the hands of the almighty God, who had as much power to keep him in the chains of death, had his sacrifice been blemished, as he had to free him when his sacrifice was spotless. Justice, therefore, is fully satisfied, since the pains of death are unloosed, Acts ii. 24, 25, &c., for it was not possible he should be holden of them, because the truth of God was engaged that his 'holy One should not see corruption.' This raising him was a justification of him, for when he was taken from prison he was taken from judgment also, that no suits could be brought against him, or any new actions laid upon him; and he was 'declared to be the Son of God,' Rom. i. 4, and if we take in ver. 3, that seed of David also, which was prophesied-of; and he was declared to be so 'with power,' *ἐν δυνάμει*, not only by the power that raised him, but by the power of the government of the world, wherein he was instated upon his resurrection. For this act of God was a testimony, that he had ordained him, and ordained him also to judge the world, Acts

xvii. 31. By this he was acquitted by God, as having done all that he did according to the articles between them. And in that act all his members have an original and fundamental discharge, to be sued out in due time in particular upon their faith. It is in this discharge he triumphs, as it was his justification before men and angels: Isa. l. 8, 'He is near that justifieth me, who will contend with me?' This is the foundation of the apostle's *epinicion* and triumphant challenge, 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56, 'O death, where is thy sting?' Where is sin, that ushered death into the world, and by it stung man to the heart? It is conquered by the resurrection of Christ, which is a clear evidence of the sweetness of this sacrifice to God, and its efficacy for us. Our faith is not in vain, which it had been, according to the apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 17, if he had not risen as he died, viz., in the quality of our surety and head. Had not the sacrifice been without exception, the devil had been the victor, and Christ his triumph. He would have acquired a stronger power over men by the least blemish, as he first gained it by Adam's sin. Had he not been justified himself, he could never have justified us, nor could the mercies of David have been sure and perpetual without it, Acts xvii. 34. So mightily pleased was God with this sacrifice, that he employed his glorious power to raise him; justice had no plea to continue him in prison, nor the devil any power to hinder the breaking of his fetters. His sacrifice was his act to propitiate God, his resurrection was God's act to comfort us.

6. The ascension and full exaltation of Christ after his bloody sacrifice is a full evidence of this doctrine. Since the promises made to Christ are accomplished, which were conditional upon the making his soul an offering for sin, it manifests he is an unexceptionable sacrifice. He had a kingdom promised him, and doth now rule in the majesty of God, Micah v. 4. Had there been the least blemish upon him, he could not have claimed the performance of any one promise, nor had justice been bound to make any good to him. Grace to man made the first promise to Christ in favour of justice, and justice would have hindered the performance of any promise had it been able to find any exception. This sacrifice of his, in pouring out his soul to death, is the foundation of all his advancement, Isa. liii. 11, 12. This being the condition on his part, could not but be followed upon the fulfilling of it with a performance of the promises on God's part. Now, Christ went first to heaven in his soul immediately after his oblation, to present his sacrifice to God, and receive his judgment about the validity of it,* for that day, the day of his sufferings, he was to be in paradise; 'after death the judgment.' This was agreeable to the type of him in the anniversary sacrifice upon the day of expiation, when the high priest was to go with the blood into the holy place immediately after the shedding of it, and sprinkle it on the mercy-seat, for after the blood was clotted it was incapable of being sprinkled. Christ immediately after his death appears in heaven to receive the acceptation of his Father. This was in his soul, his body then lying in the grave, which the Scripture calls not an ascension till his soul and body were reunited, and both went up to heaven together. By this first entrance into heaven Christ obtained eternal redemption for us. Had not this judgment passed from God of the prevalency of his sacrifice, God had never sent an angel to unlock the grave, nor a cloud as a chariot to carry him up to heaven. This supposeth his sacrifice on earth to be already ratified in heaven. By this ascension he was again declared, as well as by his resurrection, to be without sin, without any need of repeating his sacrifice, Heb. ix. 28. His triumphant entrance into heaven assures us that his sacrifice was admitted into the bosom of God with infinite delight and pleasure. He could not have had a glory,

* Lawson's Body of Divinity, book ii. chap. iii. p. 97, much changed.

had he not punctually observed his order. Triumph doth not precede but follow a victory. His going to the Father was a full conviction of the righteousness of his person and his punctual discharge of his office, and the chief topic whereby the Spirit should argue men into a compliance with him, John xvi. 9, 10, is because he is gone to the Father. Heaven had been no place for a blemished and imperfect offering. The angels had not been commanded to be his adorers, but rather with their flaming swords have chased him out of heaven; he could as little have continued there with a spot as Adam in paradise after his transgression. No gift could have been poured out upon the sons of men. The Holy Spirit could never have been the purchase of an unaccepted sacrifice. He could not have been invested with a power to exercise any office in heaven, if he had not executed what he had undertaken upon earth; he could not have lived to apply his sacrifice to us, if he had not been accepted in his offering himself a sacrifice for us. But since he sits at the right hand of God, it is an infallible token of God's absolute rest in him, and his own rest from any further travel; it is an argument of special favour and dearness; God hath given him all power in heaven and earth, ordered all the angels to worship him, and not only to give him a simple adoration, but to be at his command, his ministers and attendants in his kingdom. He subjected his whole court to him and his service; he bestowed upon him all the honour that was possible to be given him as Mediator, out of the complacency he had in him as a sacrifice. It was upon the account that he 'purged our sins' by himself, that he 'sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,' and had all that dignity conferred upon him which is afterwards named, Heb. i. 3. The whole prophecy of it is called *a song of loves*, Ps. xlv. (title.) So highly pleasing it is to God, that he will not cease shooting his arrows till he hath put every enemy under his feet, that doth not agree with him in his pleasure and delight in Christ, Ps. cx. 1. Since, therefore, he is entered into heaven, sat down at the right hand of God, and maintained the plea of his sacrifice for so many hundred years since he first entered his suit, it is a proof that the pleading his death and the sight of his sacrificed body is not wearisome and distasteful to God. It is not like a carcase that he desires to be buried out of his sight; he joyfully hears the voice of his blood sounding in his ears to this moment. Well therefore might the apostle upon this account make so great a challenge to all: Rom. viii. 33, 34, 'Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.' Christ by his death appeased the wrath of God; by his resurrection he was acquitted by the justice of God; by his ascension he took possession of his regal throne; by his sitting at the right hand of God he prevalently pleads his sacrifice for the ends for which it was offered, and by his Spirit applies his blood to them that believe in him.

7. The admirable virtue of this sacrifice evidenceth the sweetness of it in the account of God. It had a virtue antecedent to the oblation of it, and after the oblation it hath a perpetual virtue.

(1.) It had a virtue antecedent to the oblation of it. God, upon the foresight of this sacrifice to be made in due time, did dispense his pardon to those that rested upon this future sacrifice, and did not stay till the satisfaction should be made for the injury committed,* but imparted it to men that hoped in the merit of the sacrifice before the oblation of it, and released the captive upon the single bond of Christ before the actual payment of the

* Lessius de Perfect. Divin. p. 125.

ransom. Upon his promise to be a sacrifice, believers under the Old Testament were saved by the merit of it, as well as those under the new. Abraham rejoiced to see his day, and was justified by faith in him. When he appeared, his design was to 'put away sin,' Heb. ix. 25, 26. What sin? Not only sins committed while he was in the flesh, or sins committed after his ascension, but sins before, even those transgressions which the legal sacrifices, from the time of their first institution, were unable to expiate; such sins which the high priest, entering into the holy place every year with the blood of animals, was not able to wipe off; and to make that perfect which the law could not, Heb. vii. 19, and redeem from the transgressions under the first Testament, Heb. ix. 19. As an head appointed by God, he saved men before his coming, as Adam the first head ruined men before their birth. It is not more efficacious now, nor will be to eternity, than it was before; for he is the same, in point of virtue, yesterday, in ages past, as he is to-day, at present, and will be in the ages to come, Heb. xiii. 8. Whoever were accepted by God in their persons and services were accepted upon the account of the first-born or head of every creature. As in him all the elect were chosen, so in him they were all accepted, Eph. i. 4, 6. Faith was from the first ages of the world; the proper object of faith is God in the Redeemer, and he was not considered by the patriarchs but in that quality in all their sacrifices, since he had changed the government after the fall from God as creator to God as redeemer; and therefore, as all his acts of government respected the Redeemer and the redemption, so all the services of men were to respect the Redeemer promised. What God did to them was in the name of Christ, the angel of his covenant, and what they offered to God was with an eye to the promised seed, which is the same thing with our doing all things in the name of Christ, the circumstance of time only being altered, what was future then being changed into time past now. The ground of this was the agreement between God and Christ for the performance of this oblation. When bonds are agreed on, and time given for the payment of the debt, the prisoner hath his liberty till that revolution of time. Now, not only the thing to be done, but the time when it was to be done, was settled between them, called therefore a 'due time' or a stated opportunity, Rom. v. 6, and the 'fulness of time;' and till that time there was to be a *παύσεις*, a relaxation or pretermission, a not charging the debt upon them, which is the word used by the apostle, Rom. iii. 25, 'For the remission of sins that are past.' Had not this sacrifice had a virtue antecedent to the oblation of it, Christ himself in the days of his flesh could not well have uttered those words so often, 'Thy faith hath saved thee,' before he had bowed his head upon the cross. The removal of sin, the bar to communion with God, upon the credit of a future sacrifice, is an undeniable evidence how sweet the expectation of it was to God, and therefore sweet must the actual immolation of it needs be.

(2.) After the oblation, it hath a perpetual virtue. If the virtue of it before it was offered reached to the first ages of the world, as far as Adam and Abel, it will continue in as excellent a force to the last believer, that shall close up the number of the elect at the end of the world. If the blood of Abel is so efficacious as to procure a perpetual vengeance upon Cain, shall not the blood of that person, by whom God created the world, be more efficacious to procure a perpetual blessing from the grace of God, to which he is more inclined than to acts of vengeance? Though this sacrifice was but once offered, yet it works, in regard of its virtue, perpetually as a moral cause. As the act of sin ceasing, the guilt and power of sin remains binding over to punishment, so, though the act of Christ's offering himself ceased,

yet the virtue of it is durable. The blood of this redeeming victim is intimated to be an incorruptible blood: 1 Pet. i. 18, 'We are not redeemed with corruptible things, as gold and silver, but with the precious blood;' precious because incorruptible; the opposition testifies it, though it be not the same expression; precious blood is opposed to corruptible things. As his body, so likewise his blood, and the efficacy of his sacrifice, was not to see corruption; his blood is like the rod of Aaron, always flourishing in the holy of holies before the mercy-seat. Aaron's rod flourished after Aaron's death; the sacrifice of Christ is always fresh and smoking before the throne of God, producing the fruits it merited, and the grace we want. This blood is called 'a new and living way,'* as if it were just now shed, or had been sprinkled upon us as soon as it streamed out of his body. Since he is a priest for ever, the virtue of his death abides for ever; he could not be a priest for ever without an everlasting sacrifice, for priest and sacrifice are relatives. If he be a priest for ever, he is a sacrifice for ever; the same moment that the virtue of the latter ceaseth, the honour of the former would shrink away. But that is unchangeable, Heb. vii. 24. His kingdom cannot be shaken; his sacrifice, therefore, which was the foundation of his kingdom, cannot be wasted; he must cease sitting upon his throne, fall from being the Father's darling at his right hand, if the virtue of his merit, and the efficacy of his blood, should cease producing the true fruits of it among his people. Though the oblation was but once, yet the presentation is perpetual; he pleads upon his throne what he offered upon the cross. If it were a wasted thing, it were not worthy of the plea of so great a person as the Redeemer, nor worthy to be pleaded before so great a person as the Judge of all the world. He is, in regard of the continued virtue, not said to have been, but to be, our propitiation: 1 John ii. 2, 'He is the propitiation for our sins;' he *is*, not *has been*; he is now sitting in heaven; he was a propitiation on earth in his offering; he is a propitiation in heaven in the presentation of that offering. While his plea is heard, his death is accepted, for his plea is only the voice of his blood, and the fumes of his sacrifice. If the gospel must be preached to the end of the world, the virtue of his sacrifice, upon which the efficacy of the gospel depends, shall endure as long as the world endures. This perpetual virtue was typified by the ashes of the red heifer burned without the camp, which were reserved for purifying from legal uncleanness, Num. xix. 9. As the power of the devil shall never be able to pull him out of his throne, so the power of sin shall never be so prevalent as to weaken the virtue of his blood. As long as he remains in a state of life, his blood will have its efficacy, because it is the blood of the everlasting covenant, Heb. xiii. 20. What greater evidence can there be of the gratefulness of it to God, than its virtue reaching to the most distant ages of the world, and running through all the revolutions of time?

8. It is so acceptable to God, that it is a sufficient sacrifice for all, if all would accept of it, and by a fixed faith plead it. It is sufficient for the salvation of all sinners, and the expiation of all sins. The wrath of God was so fully appeased by it, his justice so fully satisfied, that there is no bar to a readmission into his favour, and the enjoyment of the privileges purchased by it, but man's unbelief. The blood of Christ is a stream, whereof all men may drink; an ocean, wherein all men may bathe. It wants not value to remove our sins, if we want not faith to embrace and plead it. As no sickness was strong enough against the battery of his powerful word when he was in the world, so no guilt is strong enough against the power of his blood, if

* Heb. x. 20, ἰδὸν πρόσφρατος, newly slain.

the terms upon which it is offered by God be accepted by us. It is absolutely sufficient in itself, so that if every son of Adam, from Adam himself to the last man that shall issue from him by natural descent, should by faith sue out the benefit of it, it would be conferred upon them. God hath no need to stretch his wisdom, to contrive another price, nor Christ any need to reassume the form of a servant, to act the part of a bloody sacrifice any more. If any perished by the biting of the fiery serpent, it was not for want of a remedy in God's institution, but from wilfulness in themselves. The antitype answers to the type, and wants no more a sufficiency to procure a spiritual good than that to effect the cure of the body. He is therefore called 'the Saviour of the world,' 1 John iv. 14. And when the apostle, upon the citation of that in the prophet, that 'whosoever believes on him shall not be ashamed,' concludes, that 'there is no difference between Jew and Gentile, but that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved,' Rom. x. 11, 13; by the same reason it may be concluded, that there is no difference between this and that man, if they believe; what is promised to one believer, as a believer, is promised to all the world upon the same condition. And when the apostle saith, ver. 9, 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe with thy heart, thou shalt be saved,' he speaks to every man that shall hear that sentence. If any man believe, this sacrifice is sufficient for his salvation. As Adam's disobedience was sufficient to ruin all his posterity, descending from him by natural generation, so is this sacrifice sufficient to save all that are in Christ by a spiritual implantation. The apostle's comparison would not else be valid: Rom. v. 18, 'As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.' And if all men in the world were united to him by faith, there could not be any more required of Christ for their salvation than what he hath already acted; for it is a sacrifice of infinite value, and *infinite* knows no limits. Since it was sufficient to satisfy an infinite justice, it is sufficient to save an inexpressible number; and the virtue of it in saving one, argues a virtue in it to save all upon the same condition. Who will question the ability of an almighty power to raise all men from death to life, that hath raised one man from death to life by the speaking of a word? If men, therefore, perish, it is not for want of value, or virtue, or acceptableness in this sacrifice, but for want of answering the terms upon which the enjoyment of the benefits of it is proposed. If a man will shut his eyes against the light of the sun, it argues an obstinacy in the person, not any defect in the sun itself.

9. The effects of this sacrifice shew the acceptableness of it to God. As the effect of Adam's disobedience demonstrates the blackness and strength of his sin, so the fruit of this sacrifice evidenceth the efficacy of it. Had it not been sweet to God, we had still been in our sins. He was to perfect his people, which had been impossible, had he not been perfect himself in his sufferings. If he hath 'perfected for ever them that are sanctified,' then that sacrifice whereby he did perfect them is fully complete, Heb. x. 14.

(1.) Remission of sin. Our lives by our rebellion were a debt to the violated law; when we transgressed the precept, we incurred the penalty. This debt is discharged to believers by Christ's offering his soul in our stead, a sacrifice for sin, a rescue for our souls. He took away sin as the Lamb of God, John i. 29; as a sacrificed lamb, for the analogy relates not to a lamb as a creature, but a lamb as a sacrifice. He took away the sin of the world;* the guilt of sin, the curse of God, whatsoever belongs to the eternal

* Chemnit. in loc.

wages of sin, he transferred upon himself. There is a perpetual virtue in its nature, *he took*, as when we say a drug purges, we signify not only the act, but the natural quality of it. The apostle concludes the efficacy of this oblation from God's remembering sin no more: Heb. x. 16-18, 'Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more; now, where remission of those is, there is no more offering for sin.' The completeness of the fruit discovers the judgment of God for the completeness of the merit upon which it is founded. Himself, therefore, after his resurrection, gives his apostles commission to publish this as the fruit of his death, to let men know that the way to heaven, in the removal of the bar, was secured by the blood of Jesus, John xx. 22, 23; Luke xxiv. 27. All the sacrifices, wherein there was a daily remembrance of sin, were abrogated as useless after this offering, which surmounted the efficacy of all the legal ones put together. They expiated ceremonial uncleanness, and the pollution of the body; this, moral iniquities and the filth of the soul. Heb. ix. 13, 14, the apostle instanceth in the most solemn offering, that of the red heifer, supposed to be of a more durable efficacy than the daily offerings, since the ashes of it were reserved for a purification for sin, Num. xix. 9. But this, much more the rest, were exceeded by this offering, that purged the conscience from those 'dead works,' that bound the soul over to eternal death. And, indeed, the ceremonial act of the high priest, in sprinkling the blood of the heifer directly before the tabernacle, ver. 4, intimated that the efficacy of it was to be derived from the flesh and blood of Christ, typified by that structure. By this we gain a plenary indulgence, so as to have 'no more conscience of sin,' Heb. x. 2. Not that there is no more sin in believers, or no more sense of sin, but no more accusations and charges of sin before God, or despairing servile thoughts for sin in their own consciences; for in his blood we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins,' Eph. i. 7. Upon which account a challenge is made by the apostle to all the believers' adversaries to bring an effectual charge against them, Rom. viii. 33, 34. It frees us not from one or two sins, but vast numbers of them: 1 John i. 7, 'The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin.' So that all the powers of hell can never lay the load upon them again; for this saves to the uttermost, covers their iniquities, and blots them out as a thick cloud. 'Death is swallowed up in victory,' the destruction and condemnation by sin; 'O death, where is thy sting?' *i. e.* where is sin? that is the sting of death, 1 Cor. xv. 54, 55. And, indeed, so acceptable to God was the first undertaking of our Saviour, that God promised him this as the fruit of his suffering, that his labour should not be in vain; that he should 'see his seed;' that 'by his knowledge he should justify many, when he bore their iniquities,' Isa. liii. 11. And, therefore, when the apostle saith, the old man is crucified with Christ, he understands that the destruction of the body of death, and the remission of all the extravagancies of it, is purchased by Christ at the hands of God, Rom. vi. 6. And all the sense we have of remission, from any ordinance, especially by that of the supper, is not from the ordinance itself, or the remembrance of this sacrifice; but from the perpetual and prevailing efficacy of it with God to this day. The removal of so great a weight from the soul, which we were unable to bear, so great a curse which we were unable to suffer, shews the high acceptableness of it with God.

(2.) The confirmation of the covenant. After sin had stepped into the world, and invaded the rights of God, the first covenant became utterly unprofitable for the relief of man. God makes a new one, which was not signified to be valid to any without sacrifice. It is not unlikely that the first declaration of it to Adam, in the promise of the seed, was accompanied

with the sacrifices of beasts, both to shew to him a token of that punishment he had merited at the hands of justice, and in what a bloody way his recovery was to be accomplished. The repetition of it to Abraham was confirmed by sacrifices, Gen. xv. 18. And the solemn covenant between God and the Israelites was confirmed by sacrifices, and the blood of them called by Moses, 'the blood of the covenant,' Exod. xxiv. 5, 8, *i. e.* a type of that blood which shall be shed for the confirmation of that blessed covenant whereby the soul shall be purified from sin. And by the institution of God this seems to be essential to a covenant with God: Ps. l. 5, 'My saints that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.' And this custom was used by the heathens in their leagues and solemn contracts between nations, and in covenants between their gods and them, which descended to them probably by tradition from the first parents, though they had lost the true intent of that tradition. All this respected the confirmation of the covenant of grace (succeeding in the room of that violated covenant of works) by the blood of the promised seed, whereby man was to be repaired, and the devil defeated. Hence is God so mightily affected with the engagement of Christ to be our surety, that he presently establisheth the covenant of being their God, and making them his people: Jer. xxx. 21, 22, 'Who is this that hath engaged his heart to approach to me, saith the Lord? Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.' This is the immediate issue of this engagement. To this purpose was he given to be a witness of the everlasting covenant, Isa. lv. 3, 4. And to this his sacrifice had an immediate respect, whence the blood that merits the striking off the chains of the prisoners, and taking away the bars, is called 'the blood of the covenant,' Zech. ix. 11. And Christ, in the institution of the supper, Luke xxii. 20, calls it 'the new testament in his blood,' *i. e.* the true blood shed for the ratification of the covenant, which was only typified by the blood of all former sacrifices. And 'for the remission of sins;' this only is mentioned, though other benefits besides this flowed from the covenant, because as sin was the foundation of all evil, so pardon of sin is the fountain of all good. Had other blessings been merited without this, a bar had been put to our enjoyment of them by the want of this. Upon this first link all other blessings in the chain of happiness depend. All the promises of God, which are branches of this federal engagement, are *yea and amen* in Christ, of an infallible certainty. He himself is 'the Amen, the faithful and true witness,' Rev. iii. 4. And to this purpose is the sacrament of the supper appointed, being the perpetual representation of this sacrifice, wherein God shews himself resolved to stand firm in the covenant, which was confirmed by the cross, and make good to a believer all the branches of it. This manifests it to be highly acceptable to God, since the covenant made just after the unprofitableness of the old is upon the account of this sacrifice ratified by God (as the sure mercies of David) in all the parts of it, to all the indigencies and highest satisfaction of every believer.

(3.) Restoration of peace, and intercourse with God. Man was upon the terms of enmity with God, hating him, and being hated by him. God hates men, not as creatures, but as sinners. Man hates God, not as God, but as sovereign and judge. Man turned off God from being his Lord; God turned off man from being his favourite. Therefore Christ in respect of this sacrifice is called *ἰλασμος*, 1 John ii. 2, our propitiation, and *ἰλαστήριον*, Rom. iii. 25, alluding both to the sacrifices and the place of the sprinkling the blood. As 'he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him,' Isa. lii. 5. And though he was reconciling us all his life, yet it is principally ascribed to his sacrifice in his death, Col. i. 21, 22. All that

Christ did in his life had not been available for us, had he not added the top-stone in the shedding of his blood; and therefore in the creed there is a *transitus*, and leap from his birth to his death, all intermediate actions of his life being omitted, because that was the great work whereby it was finished. Access to God was barred up, till the way was opened by the blessed Son of God, Heb. x. 19, 20. So much is God pleased with it, that his majesty condescends to the lowest step, to solicit his apostate creatures; and miserable man is admitted to importune God, not only with hopes, but assurance of his favour, and an happy success upon the account of this expiatory sacrifice. God hath laid aside the rigours of his justice to beseech us with the bowels of his mercy; and tore down the partition wall that hindered his deplorable creature from an access to him, and hereby given us a full evidence what an inestimable fragraney ascended from this sacrifice before him, since he did not only blot our sins out of the records of his justice, but restore us to his forfeited favour, and confer upon us the privilege of children, and converse with man as an object of his love, who before had rendered himself the mark of his wrath.

(4.) The mission of the Spirit. God first sent Christ to be an acceptable sacrifice to him, and to testify his high valuation of it, sent the Spirit in his name, or upon his account, to be an abiding comforter to us. Had not the sin which first drove the Spirit out of the world, been expiated according to the mind and will of God, he had not revisited the world, but left it in its original darkness. His first mission and all his consequent operations, are the fruits of this sacrifice. Though he was sent by the Father, yet sent 'in the name' of the Son, John xiv. 26, as a fruit of God's acceptance of him. His name had been of no prevalency for so great a gift, had not his death been first of a grateful savour with the Father. Had he not gone away, the Comforter could not have come to us, John xvi. 7, which refers not only to his ascension, but to his passion; and had he gone, and his death been unapproved of, the Spirit had stayed in heaven. Nor would the Spirit have been employed to bring things to our remembrance, which were not worth our remembrance to our comfort, if they had not been first worthy of his Father's acceptance. He was not to 'speak of himself.' John xvi. 13, *i. e.* he was not to publish a new doctrine, but impress what Christ as a prophet had taught, and what Christ as a priest had acted. He would not have been sent to act upon a weak foundation, and to propagate that which had not exactly answered the will and design of God. He was to glorify Christ (John xvi. 13, 14) *i. e.* to declare the efficacy of his death. Christ had not been a fit subject to be glorified in the world, had he not in the administration of his office glorified God, and been glorious in his eyes. And since he is an abiding Spirit, his perpetual inhabitation manifests the perpetual savour of this sacrifice; for since the first acceptance of it was the cause of his coming, the perpetual fragraney of it must be the ground of his abiding. He could no more abide, if there were an interruption of its sweetness, than he could first have come had there been a defect of sweetness in it. This sacrifice did not only procure the coming of the Spirit, but his coming with the most glorious things in the possession of God: John xvi. 15, 'All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, He shall take of mine, and shew it unto you.' All the things that the Father hath; the greatness of the Comforter, the fulness of the treasure, and his perpetual abiding with these rich gifts, are full evidences how much God is pleased with this offering. As God could not testify his good will to man in a higher manner than sending his Son to be a sacrifice for him, so he could not in a higher manner testify his delight in that sacrifice, than to send so great a

person as the Holy Ghost to be a solicitor to men to accept of it, and a Comforter to those that believe in it; the third person in the blessed Trinity, to preserve the honour of the oblation of the second. God would never have been at the expense of so great a gift, to keep up the credit of a person and sacrifice wherein he had no pleasure.

(5.) The acceptance of our persons and services. His delight in this sacrifice is the ground of the acceptation of every person accepted by him; it is 'in the beloved' that every one is 'accepted,' Eph. i. 6. Not beloved simply as his Son, the second person in the glorious Trinity, but beloved as a sacrifice; for he was beloved as he was a medium for the praise of the glory of the grace of God, which was not as he was a Son by eternal generation, but as he assumed our nature by his incarnation, and offered it to God by his passion. The Trinity had been blessed, if man had not been created, and had been blessed, if revolted man had not been redeemed, and not a spark of grace shot out upon the world. Therefore, in the following verse, this, as well as the other parts of redemption, is ascribed to his blood. Had not Christ been first accepted as an oblation of infinite value, neither the persons nor services of men, abounding with guilt and filth, could have been worthy of the notice and entertainment of God. Our acceptation is the fruit of the acceptation of the offering Christ made of himself. The pleasure God takes in his obedience to death makes believers as his members, and their services as sprinkled with his blood, delightful to God; upon which account, the last time, wherein this victim was to be offered, is called 'the acceptable year of the Lord,' Isa. lxi. 2, 'and the day of vengeance of our God;' an acceptable time, when it was the day of vengeance upon sin in the suffering of the sinner's surety.

(6.) The joys and peace of conscience. By his bonds he procured our liberty, by his condemnation our absolution, and tasted of the vengeance of God, to fill us with the delights of the Spirit.* As God had a rest in his acceptation of it, so he gives us a joy and peace in our believing it, which is the acceptation on our parts, answering to the acceptation on God's part, Rom. xv. 13. This is accompanied with a repose to the conscience, a silencing our fears, and a filling with a 'joy unspeakable and full of glory.' These gifts God doth most plentifully distribute, when we are deepest in sufferings for the acknowledgment and approbation of this sacrifice; it is then Stephen shall see the heavens opened, and behold Christ at the right hand of God; have a sense how highly God values that in heaven which wicked men reproach, and believers suffer for on earth, Acts vii. 55; then it is that a 'spirit of glory and of God rests upon them,' 1 Peter iv. 14. God eats not his morsels alone; he impresseth a joy in the hearts of his people when they are either publicly witnessing to this blood, or privately acting faith in it, or celebrating the memorials of it; when we eat our spiritual meat with 'singleness of heart,' God doth accompany it with 'gladness,' Acts ii. 46. Every beam of paradise, darting into the heart at such seasons, is a token of its sweet savour with God, and an assurance of God's valuing us, for valuing that which is so much the object of his delight. Man only stands in a posture for such spiritual viands, when he is in an exercise of an estimation of Christ, in imitation of that esteem God hath of him; this is the best savour to God, next to that of the oblation of his Son.

(7.) Bestowing of the glory of heaven upon this account. The restoring men to that eternal salvation they had lost, is a certain proof of the strength of this sacrifice. As soon as Christ was 'made perfect by suffering, he became the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him,' Heb. v. 9.

* Drelincourt.

Nothing can be a higher demonstration to the sense of the creature of God's esteem of this victim, than his admission of poor creatures to reside with him for ever to behold and enjoy his glory. By this we have liberty to enter into the holy place; not only a license or bare permission, but a right of purchase, whence it is called a 'purchased possession,' Eph. i. 14, a right of donation as a fruit of his delight in Christ: Rom. vi. 29, 'The gift of God through Jesus Christ.' Justice, that barred heaven, is satisfied, and God consented to a preparation of mansions in paradise, instead of dungeons in hell, that his enemies might become the heirs of his kingdom. So agreeable to God is the odour of this sacrifice, that God is not only content to free us from the hell we had merited, but he would also open for us the heaven we had forfeited, that we might be partakers of the glory and kingdom of his Son; not only deliver us, but perfect us; not only cross our debts that entitled us to prison, but impute a righteousness to entitle us to glory; stop the mouth of hell, and open the gates of heaven. Hence we are said to be 'raised together with Christ,' viz., by the glory of the Father, as he was to 'sit in heavenly places with Christ,' by the donation of the Father, as he did, Eph. ii. 5, 6; the meaning of which is, that by those acts of raising up and exalting to glory his sacrificed Son, he hath sealed to every believer the perfection of regeneration in a possession of glory for ever. The satisfaction God hath in the value of this offering, cannot give forth itself in fuller expressions than in our salvation by the virtue of it, everything formidable and burdensome being removed, everything great and glorious bestowed, justice with all its vengeance appeased, the law with all its retinue of curses silenced, sin with all its demerits expiated, the covenant with all its benefits ratified, peace with its blessings restored, the Spirit with all its treasures bestowed, our services purified from their filth, our consciences pacified from their fears, whatsoever is grievous abrogated, the veil of the temple, with all the heavy weight of ceremonies, rent in twain, hell quenched, and heaven prepared and furnished for all that imitate God in his valuation of this sacrifice.

Quest. What was it that rendered this sacrifice acceptable to God, and efficacious for us?

Ans. 1. The dignity of his person. That which is inferior cannot be the rest and satisfaction of a superior nature; nothing but infinite, therefore, can be the rest and satisfaction of an infinite being. The holiness and goodness of any, or of all creatures, could not render a sacrifice worthy of the acceptance of God. The holiness of a creature was not infinite, to answer the infinite evil of sin, and suit the infinite holiness of God, any more than the weakness of a creature could have rendered him strong enough to endure the strokes of an infinite justice. Since the heavens are not pure in the sight of God,* and the angels, if compared with him, are not free from vanity, Job xv. 15, iv. 18, it is necessary that he in whom God doth rest should excel, not only the dignity and perfections of angels, but the condition of any finite being. If the holy angels cannot be the rest of God, because of their natural mutability abstracted from the establishing grace of God, much less can man, who is filthy, and drinks iniquity like water; for whatsoever dignity might be considered in his person to commend the sacrifice, might be considered also in his crime to aggravate the guilt. But the dignity of this person was solely to be regarded in the offering, because he had no crime to be greatedened by the consideration of it, being offered, not for any sin of his own, but for the sins of others. This sacrifice was of infinite value, and therefore worthy of the acceptance of an infinite nature; his

* Amyrald. de Trinit. p. 245.

person was of as great a dignity as the Father's, to whom he was offered. Though there be a distinction of order between the three persons, yet not of dignity; he had no peer but God, for he was equal with him;* had equalities of perfections with God, was every way equal to the party offended; so that he is called God's fellow, one of the same nature with him; a man as stricken by the sword, yet his fellow as considered in his divine nature, Zech. xiii. 7; meant of Christ, part of the verse being applied by Christ to himself, Mat. xxvi. 31; his fellow, *though* man, yet not *as* man; in whom 'the fulness of the Godhead' dwelt, Col. ii. 9; not typically, as in the sanctuary and most holy place, nor mystically, as in believers, but personally, as his flesh was the proper flesh of the second person. Hence that name that is peculiar to the essence of God is ascribed to him: Jer. xxiii. 6, 'He shall be called the Lord our righteousness.' *Jehovah*, the incommunicable name of God; *he*, that righteous branch whom *Jehovah* should raise up, ver. 5, shall be called *Jehovah*; he that is raised up is *Jehovah*, as well as he that raised him; the glorious name of God would not have been ascribed to a simple man. He was in the form of God, before he took upon him the form of a servant, and laid not aside the form of God, when he made himself of no reputation, and in that disreputed state became obedient to the death of the cross; upon this account, his sacrifice is more worthy of acceptance than the sacrifice of all creatures. As the mediation of a prince is far more noble than that of a peasant, and the head of a king of greater value than that of a subject, the person of one David was more worth than ten thousand of the common Israelites, 2-Sam. xviii. 3; and as the person of Christ, so the sufferings of that person, are of more worth than the souls of all men, and their bodies too, cast into the scale.

The dignity of Christ thus appearing, let us see how his sufferings are dignified by the greatness of his person.

(1.) His sufferings were partly finite, partly infinite. They were finite in regard of the time of duration; finite, in regard of the immediate subject wherein he suffered, his human nature; which, being a creature, could no more become infinite, than it could omnipotent, omniscient, or eternal. But in regard of the person who suffered, the sufferings were infinite; the deity being in conjunction with the humanity. That which is finite in regard of time, and in regard of the subject, may be infinite in regard of the object. As the sin of a short minute, and the sin of a finite creature, in regard both of the time when it is committed, and the person guilty of it, is finite; but in regard of the object, God, whose glory is eclipsed, it is an infinite evil. As the greatness of an offence is to be measured by the greatness of the person whose honour is invaded; as the striking a king is capital, when the striking an ordinary man falls under a small pecuniary mulct; so the value of a satisfaction is to be measured by the excellency of the person satisfying. As therefore an infinite sin deserves an infinite punishment, because it is committed against an infinite God, so the sacrifice of Christ deserves an infinite acceptance, because it is offered by an infinite person. The subject sacrificed makes the sacrifice infinitely grateful; as well as the person offended renders the injury infinitely heinous. This was not the sacrifice of a man or an angel, but of the head of the creation, 'the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of his person,' Heb. i. 3, by which his sufferings were advanced into infinity, and the merit of them an infinite odour before God. There could not have been so much honour rendered to God by the obedience of a mere creature, as there was injury offered him by the transgression of the sinner.† Though our sins were not

* Philip. ii. 6.

† Amyrald. de Trinitate, p. 265.

infinite in number, because no number can increase so vastly as to be actually infinite, since it is composed of units added to one another; yet had they been far less, they had needed an infinite virtue in the sacrifice, by reason of the infiniteness of their guilt, because the majesty of God and his perfections are infinite, which are dishonoured by sin. Such a sacrifice this is, which hath an infinite virtue of expiating.

(2.) This infiniteness ariseth from the near and strait union of the divine with the human nature. It was not the simple offering a sacrifice by the Son of God which was so acceptable. Had the Son of God offered anything else, though the offerer had been infinite, yet the offering had been finite, because not allied to, and in conjunction with, the person offering. It was infinitely valuable, not because himself was the offerer, but because himself was the offering, offering that which was in conjunction with his deity, 'purged by himself,' Heb. i. 3. 'Offered himself up through the eternal Spirit,' Heb. ix. 14. By the personal union, the dignity was conferred upon the sufferings of his human nature. If you will say, a sacrifice had been infinite, only because it was offered by an infinite person, you may as well call the meanest worm in the world infinite, because it was made by an infinite God, and in an infinite manner of operation. The dignity therefore ariseth from the unity of the same infinite person, in whom the two natures were united; so all the actions of Christ, as mediator, received their value from his person. And by reason of the unity of his person, that which was the act of one nature is attributed to the other, as when it is said, John iii. 13, 'The Son of man came down from heaven;' *i.e.* that person who was man, though his human nature had not been in heaven. And when his blood is called 'the blood of the Son of God,' 1 John i. 7, and 'the blood of God,' it was not the blood of the Godhead, but of that person who was God.

(3.) In regard of this near conjunction, the Godhead of Christ did influence every mediatory action. (I do not take in all the actions of the human nature, that had no respect to his meditation, any more than as they did refer to the sustentation of his human nature, as his eating, drinking, sleeping, &c.) This value was as inseparable from his sufferings, as the divine nature was inseparable from the human. In all that he did, he was the Son of God; as much upon the cross as before his descent from heaven; in the lowest pitch of his humiliation, as well as in his highest state of exaltation; the Son of God as much, when at his death he said, 'It is finished,' as after his resurrection, when he said, 'all power is given to me.' The man against whom the sword did awake, was God's fellow when he felt the piercing edge of it, Zech. xiii. 7. Indeed, he laid aside the manifestation of his glory, but could not lay aside his glory; for then he might lay aside his eternity, omnipotency, his deity, and cease from being God, which is utterly impossible. He was always the same, and as his years, so neither did his glory fail, Heb. i. 12. In all his sufferings he retained the relation and reality of the Son of God, the union of his natures remained firm in all his passions; and therefore the efficacy of the Deity mingled itself with every groan in his agony, every pang and cry upon the cross, as well as with the blood which was shed; and as his blood was the blood of God, Acts xx. 28, so his groans were the groans of God, his pangs were the pangs of God, and were therefore subjectively infinite in value. Yet did not every groan and pang procure our redemption by itself, upon the account of the infiniteness of its value in being the groans of God, because they without death did not answer the tenor of the law, nor was the curse of the law, which he was designed to endure, accomplished in any act of suffering, without shedding of blood, and that to death: Heb. ix. 22, 'Without shedding of blood there is no remis-

sion; for as there was a necessity of the conjunction of the divine nature with the human, to make his sufferings infinite, so there was a necessity of a full conformity to the threatening of the law, and his Father's order, to make them efficacious for the honour of God and redemption of the creature. The sum is this: as what the divine nature acted was wrought instrumentally by the human, so what the human nature acted or suffered was made efficacious, and dignified by the divine.

(4.) In this respect God his deity may be accounted as it were suffering, or as if he suffered. It was not necessary his deity should suffer to make the sacrifice infinite, and indeed it was impossible. The divine nature is as impassible as it is immutable; yet in regard of the strait union of the two natures, his mediatory actions and sufferings, being the actions and sufferings of the person, may be counted as the sufferings of the Deity itself, in a moral way, and by legal estimation; as sin is called *Deicidium*, not that it is so, or can be so physically, but in a moral way, in men's doing that which puts on the nature of destroying God, were it in the power of the sinner, or possible in itself; or as sin in Scripture is called a wearying of God, when omnipotency cannot be tired, and if God were tired, he were not omnipotent. But they carry themselves so towards God, as would weary the most patient man in the world, and it is esteemed by God a wearying of him. As Christ was not guilty of sin, but in a juridical manner, by reason of his voluntary subjection to punishment in the stead of the sinner, so neither could the divine nature suffer but by way of estimation, as the person of the Son of God did voluntarily assume the human nature wherein he was to suffer. As Christ hung upon the cross as if he were guilty, so the divine nature in conjunction with it might be esteemed to suffer, as if it were passible; the Deity did suffer in an eclipse of its glory, and veiling the manifestation of it. Hence, as he had a body, his blood was the blood of a man, yet because it was the blood of his person it was the 'blood of the Son of God,' 1 John i. 7, and the 'blood of God,' Acts xx. 28. The immediate subject suffering was the human nature, but the person suffering was the Lord of glory, 1 Cor. ii. 8. In that state and condition he offered up himself, which the apostle signifies: Heb. ix. 14, 'He offered up himself through the eternal Spirit.' *Διὰ*, *through*, imports not only that the divine nature of Christ did offer the sacrifice, but it seems to have the same sense as the same word *διὰ*, Rom. iv. 11, 'The Father of them that believe, though they be not circumcised,' *διὰ ἀκροβυστίας*. The Father of them that believe through uncircumcision, *i. e.* in an uncircumcised state,* or Rom. ii. 27, 'who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law,' *διὰ γράμματος*, *through*; not that circumcision† was the cause of the one's faith, or uncircumcision† the cause of the other's sin, but that the one believed, and the other transgressed in those several states. So Christ here, when he offered himself, was not in the condition of a mere man, but had a divine and eternal nature in the offering himself up unto God. It is from this state and condition of his in his suffering, that the apostle draws an argument for the value of his suffering above those of the legal sacrifices, and their excellency to purge the conscience, and put the emphasis of a *how much more?* The very foundation of our redemption by his blood is his being the image of the invisible God: Col. i. 14, 15, 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, who is the image of the invisible God.'

(5.) Hence it follows, that the sufferings of this person, because of his dignity, were equivalent to an endless duration of punishment, because the infiniteness of the person did more than recompense the shortness of the

* Amyrald. in loc. et de Trinit. p. 268.

† Qu. 'uncircumcision,'—'circumcision'?—ED.

duration of his punishment. As the dignity of his person did outweigh the persons of all the angels, and all men in the world, had they been without spot, so the time of his sufferings, though the moments of enduring them had been fewer, in regard of his greatness, was equivalent to the eternity of the sufferings of all creatures; because it was more that God should suffer one minute, than that all creatures in heaven and earth should endure torments to an endless eternity.

(6.) Hence it follows, that in regard of the dignity of his person, he was not only equivalent, but superior to all those for whom he was a sacrifice, and to all for which he was a sacrifice. The sacrifice was as noble as the sin was vile, and offered by an hand more honourable than the persons, by whom the crime was committed, could be unworthy. The dignity of the person was greater than the meanness of the offender could be base. The sin could not be more infinitely evil than the person satisfying was infinitely excellent. What an infinite object suffered by the offence, was made up by an infinite subject expiating the crime. The dignity of his person is the reason why his righteousness hath a sufficiency in it for all 'unto justification of life,' Rom. v. 19, 20. He is superior to all that were to be redeemed by him out of every kindred and tongue, people and nation, because he is God blessed for ever. The oblation is greater than the offence, and the offerer than the transgressor. What wrath so infinite, that the blood of an infinite God cannot calm? What death so sharp and strong, that the life of God cannot remove? It should be no less a cordial to us than it is a savour to God, to think that our sacrifice is as infinite as the wrath we had merited, and more infinite than the sin whereby we had deserved it. Our sin was *objectively* infinite, as committed against God; our sacrifice was *objectively* infinite, as offered to God, proportionable to the honour he would have repaired; and *subjectively* infinite, in regard of the sacrifice offered for the reparation of it. God regarded him as the man his fellow when he struck him; we should regard him in the same relation when we plead him. To conclude, since this victim was equal with God, equal with him in essence, equal with him in nature and perfections, he could not be displeased with the sacrifice, unless he had been displeased with himself and his own nature.

2. As the dignity of the person, so the purity of the sacrifice renders it fragrant to God, and efficacious for us. His freedom from taint, and conjunction with the fulness of the Deity, are linked together in demonstrating the efficacy of it to purge our consciences from dead works: Heb. ix. 14, 'Who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot.' He was as free from blemish as full of an eternal Spirit. The spotlessness of his human nature was necessary to his being a sacrifice, and the union of the divine nature was necessary to his being a valuable one. As the legal lambs were to be without blemish, so was Christ a 'Lamb without spot,' 1 Peter i. 19. He had no sin naturally imputed (juridically indeed he had), no sin personally inherent; he had no sin naturally imputed, because he was not in the loins of him who introduced sin into the world, and derived it to his posterity. His extraordinary conception by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin was a bar against original sin; whence by way of emphasis he is called 'that holy thing,' Luke i. 35. He was infinitely holy as he was God, habitually holy as he was man. Every faculty of his soul, every member of his body, was elevated to the highest degree of holiness. His human nature was holy by the union of the divine, holy by the effusion of the Spirit, whose office it is to sanctify. Though by reason of the divine nature united, it was impossible but that his human nature should be holy (the person of the Son of God would never have assumed a tainted nature), yet the holiness

of his human nature did flow from the stores of the Spirit, it being not the office of the second, but third person, to sanctify. But the human nature in conjunction with the divine could not but be pure. Had that been tainted while in union with the divine, making but one person, the taint might have been called the sin of God, as well as the blood of his body be called the blood of God. A thing therefore not to be imagined possible. He was holy in every action. As he was man, he was bound to all sorts of obedience; for having taken the nature, he was subject to all the duties incumbent on that nature; and he did run through every economy, he observed the law of nature, conformed to the ceremonial part of the Mosaic institutions, submitted to the baptism of John, a mid state of the church, and therein 'fulfilled all righteousness,' Mat. iii. 15, the righteousness of the positive laws of God in every state. He was holy in all his offices, harmless as a priest, faithful as a prophet; holy in his life, holy in his death, no guile was found in his mouth, no inordination of murmuring in his heart. Had there been any spot (which is impossible) his sacrifice could not have been for our sins, it must have been for his own; if his own debt could have been paid by it, ours could not; his spot had been infinitely greater than ours can be; it had been objectively infinite as ours, and subjectively infinite, which is more than ours. The rights of God had been more invaded, instead of being repaired; the guilt would have been as great in the sinner as the satisfaction could have been in the sufferer; a subjective infiniteness in the sin, as well as a subjective infiniteness in the sacrifice. But there was not, there could not be any of this; Satan could not charge him with any, but confessed him holy, Mark i. 24. The all-discerning eye of God could see nothing contrary to his honour, but justified him as holy, Heb. vii. 26. Impurity had been contrary to the dignity of his person. God could as well be unholy as the person of Christ unholy. His holiness therefore was infinite, though the holiness of his human nature was not of itself infinite, no more than his sufferings were of themselves, and in regard of the human nature, the subject suffering, infinite; yet the holiness of his human nature derived from it an infinite value, so that there was an infinite holiness in this sacrifice offered to an infinitely holy God. It had no stain to be purged by the addition of another bloody offering. It answered the design of God, terminated the rest and delight of God. Needs then must such a holiness be highly acceptable to God, who loves and is delighted with righteousness in this creature, much more with that of his only Son, the unstained and infinitely pure sacrifice for us.

3. The graces exercised in this sacrifice, rendered it fragrant in the account of God.

1. His obedience. The acceptableness of it to God did not arise simply from his dying, but his obedience in his death: Philip. ii. 8, 'Became obedient unto death;' and not only from an obedience to the law of nature, and the precepts of God as a creature, but his obedience to the law of redeeming love as a mediator, and his delight in it, Ps. xl. 8. As the disobedience of man shook the rest of God, so the obedience of the Son of God settled the rest of the Deity. Obedience run through the whole web of his life, he submitted to a body fitted for those dreadful strokes of wrath we should have endured; a body made under the law, Gal. iv. 4. He delighted in the thoughts of performing the will of God in our flesh; he came not to do his own will; whatsoever his Father ordered him, that he spake, that he did, that he suffered, he laid down his body when the hour was come appointed by his Father. It was not a simple but an affectionate obedience: John xiv. 31, 'I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even

so do I;' where principally his obedience to the mediatory law is intended; as also, Philip. ii. 8, 'Obedient to the death of the cross,' which the law did not oblige him to; the moral law bound over the sinner to death, but the mediatory law bound over Christ to death in our stead. The obedience to the moral law, or law of nature, as it concerned the state of angels, was performed by him without any defect; in this the obedience of Christ was greater than theirs, in regard of the infinite dignity of his person above all the angels in heaven; yet the rule of their obedience was of the same nature. But in the obedience of the mediatory law, the Redeemer stood single; as he trod the wine-press alone, so in the whole mediatory work none were in conjunction with him, none had any likeness or resemblance to him. This was above the obedience of all creatures, not only in regard that it was the obedience of him that was God, but an obedience wherein he could not be imitated by any creature already created, or that could be created, it being a work above the strength of any created being. It was obedience under the highest provocations to resume his glory, and come down from the cross, and declare at that moment the iniquity of those reproaches they cast upon him. Obedience in the highest pitch of his sufferings, obedience in heaven, practising that compassionate obedience upon the throne which he learned by his sufferings on the cross, Heb. v. 8, acting according to his Father's orders, presenting his obedience on the cross, as meritorious for his members he left in the world. If the obedience of Abraham, a sinful creature, in his willingness to offer up his son Isaac, a sinful creature also, was so pleasing to God that thereupon he makes him glorious promises, how much more grateful is the obedience of him who was God, and offered not up a son, but himself, a pure, not a spotted sacrifice! If obedience be better than sacrifice, then sacrifice is insignificant without obedience. The offering himself a sacrifice according to the will of God for our sanctification, was the most significant part of his obedience, Heb. x. 7, 10. In this he did exactly answer the mediatory law as his rule, and God found the will of Christ in the performance, fully conformable to his own will in the precept, more obedient to the will of God in his offering, than Adam was disobedient to the will of God in his sinning. Such a height and perpetuity of obedience, under all the circumstances of temptations, the strugglings of the flesh, which could not but desire the removal of penal evil, under the fear of wrath also, the sense of agonies, and reproaches of men, whereby he testified, that he preferred the glory of his Father above the safety of his own nature, obedience to his command above the contentment of his flesh, and was swayed by the form of a servant to submit, against the suggestions from his nature as a man to desire the passing it away; all this, I say, rendered his sacrifice highly acceptable.

(2.) His humility. His humility is joined with his obedience as the cause of his exaltation, which was the evidence of its fragranciness, Philip. ii. 8. God loves to be imitated in his condescensions to his creature. The condescension of Christ equal with God, to the 'taking upon him the form of a servant,' setting himself in the stead of the sinner, the eclipsing his own glory, shrouding it under the disguise of our flesh, submitting to an harder piece of service and a deeper humiliation than any creature in heaven or earth was capable of; to descend from heaven to earth, expose himself to the fury of men and devils without murmuring; to bow his head to the stroke, not of an honourable, but an infamous death; endure the wrath of a Father he loved, come down to the lowest step before he did reassume the glory which was due to him, was an unexpressible and unimitable act of humility. Lower than this he could not humble himself. Since humility

renders men so pleasing to God, that he heaps upon them the greatest testimonies of his favours, and richly dispenseth to them the doles of his grace, James iv. 6 ; it must render his Son in those sufferings most acceptable to his Father, and draw from him the greatest distribution of his favour, because it was the greatest act of humility, as well as obedience, that could possibly be performed.

(3.) His faith. This resolution of trust he brought with him, and this resolution he kept: Heb. ii. 13, 'I will put my trust in him,' cited out of Ps. xviii. 2. He had not a spark of infidelity, or any grain of distrust in the goodness of God. He suffered for a time the torments of hell, without the despair of the inhabitants of hell ; he had a working of faith under the sense of his Father's greatest displeasure, and confided in his love while he felt the outward and inward force of his frowns. The sharpness of the scourge, and the smart of his wounds, beat not off his soul from a fast adherence to him. He had a faith of the acceptableness of his death for his elect, and gave evidence of his confidence in the promise for a happy and glorious success, in acting like a king while he was hanging as a malefactor on the cross, in distributing his largesses to the poor thief, assuring him, that that day he should be with him in paradise. He let not his confidence in his Father flinch ; he confided in him for the bestowing that royal power upon him, which he signified by this promise of paradise to this criminal upon the cross : and both his obedience to God in not turning away his back, and his trust in God for his assistance, are put together as the ground of his justification, Isa. l. 5, 7, 8. The height of his faith was to be discovered in opposition to the unbelief of Adam ; his humility in opposition to the pride of Adam ; his obedience in doing all according to God's order, in opposition to the disobedience of Adam. By his active and passive obedience, he glorified the holiness and justice of God ; by his humility, the sovereignty and power of God ; by his trust, the faithfulness and veracity of God : all which must needs render his sacrifice as a sweet-smelling savour, and efficacious for us.

4. In regard of the full compensation made to God by this sacrifice, and the equivalency of it to all the demands of God. His obedience was fully answerable to the law : his active answered the preceptive part, and his passive the penalty. As he fulfilled the righteousness of the law in his life, so he underwent the threatenings of the law in his death ; he obeyed the commands in our stead, and sustained the curse. He bore the sorrows we should bear: Isa. liii. 4, 'Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows,' spiritual as well as bodily. He took our nature, soul and body, to suffer in that nature what was due to our souls and bodies. Our whole nature had sinned, and our whole nature must suffer ; Christ took our nature, that he might suffer what was due to our nature. He suffered in his soul, which is the greatest part of our nature, as well as in his body, which is but the case and sheath of the soul. It is against the order of justice, for the principal to sin, and the accessory only be punished. The punishment threatened against the first Adam was the death of the soul as well as of the body ; the punishment borne by the second Adam was of the same nature : not a spiritual death, a separation from God by sin, that he was incapable of, but a moral death, a separation from God by desertion. When he cried out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?' he was forsaken of God in regard of the sensible comforts of his presence, though not in regard of the invisible sustentations of his soul. The union of the two natures was not dissolved, but the comfort of the Father's presence was eclipsed. Though he did not suffer eternity of torments, yet he suffered what was due to us ; for eternity of punishment is not primarily threatened in the law, but second-

arily inferred. Death was threatened, but because man cannot satisfy by death, therefore he lies under that death for ever. He is kept in prison, because he cannot pay the debt which is due, nor repair the honour of the law which was violated. Justice would always be striking, and never contented. If the honour of the law could have been vindicated, and the justice of God satisfied by the temporary groans of a creature, not only the goodness of God, but the justice of God would release him; but because the justice of God could never have been satisfied, the person of the sinner must always have been a sufferer. Christ, therefore, suffering a cursed death, suffered what we should have suffered; death was threatened to us, and death was inflicted on him; the eternity of death was accidental. As Christ obeyed the whole law, yet not every accidental relation of the law, as it respected men in particular states, and particular callings and relations; as the duty of a parent to a child, of an husband to a wife; not for want of a principle of obedience in him, but for want of those particular relations to which those particular acts of obedience were annexed. So Christ suffered every part of the curse, but not the sins consequent upon that curse by reason of the corruption of man, nor the accidental continuance of the curse, which the impotence of man to satisfy rendered him obnoxious to, but the strength of Christ exempted him from. He endured all that the law imposed upon sinners,* whether in regard of loss by desertion or in regard of sense by malediction; hence he is said to be made a curse, Gal. iii. 13; to be made sin, 2 Cor. v. 21. And if so, he bore the punishment due to us, since the law threatened no more than a curse, and Christ bore the curse according to the threatening of the law. He suffered that which the law demanded of us, and was made such a curse as the law required. He suffered the torments of hell without the iniquities of hell, which were not possible to be committed by an infinitely holy person; he suffered those agonies which were of the nature of the torments of hell, and that desertion of God which is the sting of hell. Nothing was emitted that was demanded by divine holiness for keeping the commands, or by divine justice for violating the commands. As we were creatures, we owed God a debt of duty; as we were revolted creatures, we owed God a debt of punishment. Since our fall, sin hath made us incapable to answer the holiness of God in the performance of our duty, and our nature as creatures renders us too weak to satisfy the justice of God by enduring the penalty exacted by the law. Christ hath done both; and in answering the whole demand of the law, as to both debts, delights the holiness of God, satisfies the justice of God, and by both repairs the creature. If the creature could have satisfied justice for what was past, yet it still lay under a debt of duty for the time to come. If it had fallen short of this, it must have reassumed its suffering. What a deplorable condition had this been, to have come out of suffering one hour and return to it the next! But our Redeemer performs an obedience that reacheth to the utmost of the creature's duty, and endures a penalty that reaches to the utmost of the creature's demerits. A recompence was made by the obedience of Christ for the disobedience of Adam: Rom. v. 19, 'As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.' For what had the law to enjoin which he did not perform, or what had the law to inflict which he did not endure? Had he not done and suffered what the law required, how could he be called the 'end,' or perfection, 'of the law for righteousness'? Rom. x. 4. Had he not suffered what was due to sin, he could not have 'made

* Turretin. de Satisfact. p. 324.

an end' of it; and had he not done what the law commanded, he could not have 'brought in an everlasting righteousness,' Daniel ix. 24. He is *λύτρον*, Mat. xx. 28, *ἀντίλυτρον*, 1 Tim. ii. 6, a valuable price and sacrifice, commensurate to the demerit of our crimes. He suffered whatsoever was requisite to discharge our debts, and could not have been *ἀντίψυχος*, offering his soul instead of ours, if he had not borne in his soul what we were to bear in ours. In regard therefore of the full compensation made to God, it must needs be fragrant to God and efficacious for us.

5. In regard of the glory Christ by his sacrifice brought to God. The glory of God was that which he aimed at, and that which he perfected. It was the will of God which he came to do; but the design of God's will is to glorify himself, and declare his own name in all his acts. The glory of all the attributes of God appeared in the face or manifestation of Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 6. They all centred in him, and shone forth from him in all their brightness, and in a full combination set off one another's lustre; not only in his incarnation, but also, and that chiefly, in his sacrifice. Mercy could not be glorified unless justice had been satisfied, and justice had not been evident if the tokens of divine wrath had not been upon him. Grace had not sailed to us but in the streams of his blood: 'without blood there is no remission.' Justice had not been so fully known in the eternal groans of a world of creatures, nor could sin have appeared so odious to the holiness of God by eternal scars upon devils and men, as by the deluge of blood from the heart of this sacrifice. Wisdom in the contrivance had not been evident without the execution. The glory of the divine perfections had lain in the cabinet of the divine nature, without the discovery of their full beams; and though they were active in the designing it, yet they had not been declared to men or angels, without the bringing Christ to the altar. By the stroke upon his soul, all the glories of God flashed out in the view of the creature. When Judas went out from his company to prepare the way for his oblation, 'Now,' saith he, 'is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him,' John xiii. 31. The honour of God and the glory of the Son depended upon this point, and in this last act threw off all their veils. The Father was glorified in appointing him, and the Son was glorified in submitting to be a sacrifice; the truth of God was glorified in bringing things to a period, and the obedience of his Son was glorified in his perseverance to the last act. His grace was elevated to the highest note in the songs of angels, an unsearchable depth of manifold wisdom was unfolded, a depth of wisdom more impossible to be comprehended in our minds than the whole globe of heaven and earth in our hands; such a wisdom of God in the cross, which the angels never beheld in his face upon his throne; wisdom to cure a desperate disease by the death of the physician, to turn the greatest evil to the greatest glory, to bring forth mercy by the shedding of blood. The ultimate design of this victim was the honour of God in our redemption; Christ sought not his own glory, John viii. 50, but the glory of his Father in the salvation of men. Needs must that be fragrant to God that accomplished the triumph of all his attributes.

III. Use.

1. If this sacrifice be acceptable to God, it is then a perfect oblation. If it had not been perfect in itself, it could not have been accepted by an infinite justice, a justice inexorable without it. An incomplete offering could have given but an imperfect satisfaction, and that had been as good as no satisfaction at all. God would never have approved it; an all-seeing wisdom could not be deceived, a severe justice could not have acquiesced in it, a pure holiness could not have smelt a sweet savour from it. God as a

judge delivered him to be a sacrifice, God as a judge accepted him after he was offered. This sacrifice therefore answered the ends of God, both satisfied his justice and glorified his holiness. How could God else judicially glorify him, if he had not been fully glorified by him? If he had performed an imperfect obedience, he would at the best have had but an half exaltation, or rather none; but since he hath been accepted with the highest pleasure, and hath a glory in the highest pitch, he hath performed an obedience to the utmost point, and touched the goal designed him. Though there was grace in God's appointing it, yet there was no grace given out to make it acceptable. God did not supply by his acceptance any defect in the sacrifice. There was a meritorious worthiness on Christ's part before there was an acceptance on God's part; it was not perfect by acceptance, but it was accepted because of its perfection. Infinite purity accepts nothing but what is perfect in itself, or hath a relation to that which is perfect and agreeable to its nature. He doth indeed accept the imperfect obedience of believers, but not for itself, but for this sacrifice, to which by faith it hath a relation. Had it not had a gratefulness in itself, God could have scented nothing in it; he could not have smelt a savour where none was; it would have been as little pleasing to him as the burnt-offerings under the law. This could not but be perfect in the account of God, since there was the humanity in conjunction with the divinity to be the sacrifice, and the divinity in conjunction with the humanity to be the altar for the sanctification of it; and the sequel shews that the offering hath been as valuable as the offence was provoking, since in consideration of it, justice forgets the injuries done to the Deity, and treats believers as heirs of heaven, instead of rebels. It is the inference the apostle draws from the priesthood of Christ, Heb. viii. 12; and what is the fruit of his priesthood, is the fruit likewise of his sacrifice. The righteousness of Christ is also perfect, since the all-searching eye of God sees nothing in it to give him any cause of distaste. It is perfect because everlasting, Daniel ix. 24. All the righteousness of the holy angels in heaven, had there been numberless millions of them, had not been so pleasing to God as this.

2. All popish doctrines of satisfaction, and all resting upon our own righteousness and inherent graces, are to be abandoned. There is a natural popery in the minds of men; fallen man is desirous to stand upon his own bottom, and is as little content with God's judgments of things as his first parent was in paradise. We are studious of making God compensations, applauding ourselves in our own inventions and satisfactions of our own mintage, unwilling to acquiesce in his wisdom.

(1.) This is an high presumption. If Christ were a perfect sacrifice in the esteem of God, it is a boldness and blasphemy in us not to think him so. If it be perfect, what need of anything from us to piece it out? If it were not sufficient, God was much mistaken to accept it; if it were not perfect, Christ had a want of strength and holiness to be a sacrifice, and God a want of wisdom to discern the defects of it; he was then deceived to count that sweet which needed something else to sweeten it. Such additions are an injury to Christ; it is to make him but half a sacrifice, since he hath 'offered himself to God without spot,' Heb. ix. 14. Can we pretend to any other, without charging him with weakness and deficiency? Is not his divinity enough to make his offering complete, without any supply from our corrupt humanity? Can we acknowledge that perfect, that we think needs something from us to strengthen it? It must be, then, a false assertion of the apostle, when he saith, Heb. x. 14, that 'by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.' To make Christ in part a Saviour

is to make him in part no Saviour, and to ascribe salvation to something else as well as to him. All such satisfactions entrench upon the honour of Christ's sacrifice, and pull the crown from his head to set it upon our own; or at best, ascribe that in part to ourselves which is wholly due to him: by how much the more sufficient it is for us without any addition, so much the more glory redounds to the sacrifice. He needs no more of additions to sweeten his offering, than he needed of cordials to strengthen and support him in the time of his sufferings; they are rather gall and vinegar offered him upon his throne, as the Jews did in the time of his oblation upon the cross. It is an high presumption in us not to be content to rest in that which is the rest and pleasure of God.

(2.) It is a folly. It is as if a man should set up candles to increase the light of the sun, and eke out its beams. Can the righteousness of a man add any perfection to the blood of a God? or perfect a work which could not be done by the Deity? If God stood not in need of anything from us to perfect his work of creation, how can man be so foolish to imagine that Christ stands in need of anything from us to perfect his work of redemption? If that sacrifice wants something to render it efficacious, it must be a sacrifice of the same kind; nothing that is of an inferior nature can add an intrinsic value to that which is superior. What can man offer to God that can be in any sort equivalent to this sacrifice already accepted? All that we can offer to God is but as a few blasted ears of corn, such as Pharaoh saw in a dream, which can add nothing to the value of it. If there had been any failure in him, the defects of a redeemer could not be repaired by the offerings of the captives; and if there be no failure, all additions, all other inventions of atonement, are utterly superfluous. How foolish will it be to rest in that which God never pronounced or owned to be a sweet-smelling savour to him! If all our righteousness be as a menstruous rag, Isa. lxiv. 6, the offering it up to God is a noisome stench, not a pleasure. The best of our works and graces derive a sweetness and value from the virtue of this sacrifice, without contributing anything to the savour of it. It is a folly to leave a sure for an uncertain road. All other rests have no divine stamp and signature upon them. God never found any savour in any other offering. The Spirit of God never gave any so noble a character as this, of a sweet-smelling savour, but as they had a relation to this as the antitype of them. This one victim sends forth more grateful odours to God, and is more efficacious for the concerns of our souls, than the joint intercessions of saints and angels. Let us therefore be diligent in our duties, aim at the perfection of an inherent righteousness, but never place our confidence in them, or equal them to the sacrifice God hath so affectionately accepted. Did God ever set up his rest in the services of a creature? Can this be savoury to an infinite purity? Whatsoever is done without faith is but the offering of an enemy, whatsoever fair colours it may be outwardly adorned with. The Scripture sets an impossibility upon the head of all these: Heb. xi. 6, 'Without faith it is impossible to please God;' to gain or keep his favour. Whatsoever is done without faith, though of the highest elevation, is but a creature, and therefore not the object of trust. And whatever significance believing works have, is from the tincture they receive from the blood of this sacrifice, wherein faith dips them, as being faith in the blood of Christ. Though Adam, while he continued in his created rectitude, might have entered his righteousness as a plea, yet, because it was mutable, it had been no fit object of trust for him. But since our revolt, all pleas of a fleshly corrupted righteousness are overruled in the court of heaven, and our pleas must run in another name; all other things have ceased to be savoury to

God, since they were tainted by sin. Let men 'make lies their refuge,' and 'hide themselves under falsehood,' the false coverings of their own righteousness, and think to shelter themselves 'from the overflowing scourge,' Isa. xxviii. 15-17; it will be a miserable self-deceit; 'the hail will sweep away such a refuge, and the waters will overflow such a hiding-place.' All other hiding-places, but the smoke of this sacrifice, are too weak to preserve us from the overflowing waters of divine vengeance.

3. It is a desperate thing to refuse this sacrifice, which is so sweet to God.

(1.) It is a great sin. As faith in Christ redounds to the honour of God, as being an approbation of his mercy, justice, and wisdom in the acceptance of this sacrifice, so unbelief redounds to the contempt of God, as slighting all the pleasure the wisdom, the justice, and holiness of God took in it, as though he were delighted with a sleeveless and unworthy matter. It is to trample upon that which is God's delight; accounting that which is sweet to the Deity loathsome to us; refusing to be guided by God's judgment of this offering; setting up our own wisdom not only equal with, but above the wisdom of God; a regarding that which God is infinitely pleased with as a frivolous thing, as though God had pleased himself with a trifle, or smelt sweetness in a weed. God's acceptance of it owns a fragraney in it; man's refusal calls it gall and vinegar, a rotten service. God's language is, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,' Mat. iii. 17; this is my odoriferous sacrifice, with which I am infinitely delighted. The language of an unbeliever's heart is, This is an offering in which I can find no pleasure. The heart of God and the heart of an unbeliever, the wisdom of God and the judgment of an unbeliever, stand in direct opposition. How inexcusable a pride is it to think that not worth our receiving which God hath entertained with the highest affection; to count that unsavoury which God hath accepted as the sweetest present can be given him in heaven or earth! Unbelief cannot be excused without accusing God of weakness and folly. It is a sin against his precept, as he commands us to believe; a sin against his pattern, as he directs us by his own act to an acceptance of him. Other sins are against his sovereignty in the violations of his law. This is against his wisdom in his gracious acceptance of a propitiating sacrifice for us. We disown him as our Lord, and as our pattern.

(2.) It will end into a great misery. God will not suffer that which is sweet to him to be slighted by man, without the recompence of a just indignation. The vagabond nation of the Jews bears to this day the sad tokens of God's vengeance upon them for the unworthy refusal of so great a victim. 'Because of unbelief they are broken off' from the root, Rom. xi. 20, and are deprived of all the sweetness which God and believers taste in it. Nothing in the world was ever the object of God's delight but this; nothing in the world can ever be pleasant to him without this. To neglect it, is to neglect that which is the only thing God will accept, and so fall under the condemnation of law and gospel too. It is to reject God as a satisfied judge in the flowings of his mercy, to fall under God as a provoking judge in the thunders of his wrath. If we will not comply with divine justice in an estimation of it, we must fall under his fury for our contempt. If this offering be not cordially, and upon God's terms, accepted by us, we must be a sacrifice ourselves; justice must have a sacrifice for every sinner, from himself or another. God, in honour, will not pardon sin without one; in greater honour he cannot but punish sin upon the refusal of this. Oh how fearful a thing is it to fall into the hands of the living God: * a living unpacified God, a living and reproached God, a living God who hath been

* Heb. x. 31, compared with ver. 29.

counted a ridiculous fool by a wilful sinner, in his accounting the blood of the covenant as an unholy thing! God will not have his wisdom jostled against by the folly of his creature. 'No other sacrifice remains for sin.' No other mark of distinction was appointed by God for the securing the firstborn of the Israelites from the stroke intended for the Egyptian heirs* but the blood of the paschal lamb sprinkled upon the posts of the doors; had any fed upon the lamb, and neglected the sprinkling, he had felt the sharp sword of the destroying angel; the lamb had been of no efficacy to him, not for any defect in that, but negligence or contempt in the offender. The sacrifice of Christ hath an infinite virtue to save; but it is no remedy to them that will not sprinkle their souls by faith with the blood of it; without this, we shall remain in our unatoned sins, and have the sword of vengeance doubly whetted against us.

4. It administers matter of comfort to the believer. It is some comfort to all, that they are in a fair way of being happy; the justice of God was the bar to God and man's meeting together. It was morally impossible, in regard of God's truth and holiness, for man to be restored without a vindication of that law which had been broken; but now the honour of the law is restored by this sacrifice; God hath owned it, the bar is removed, and where God hath found a sweetness man may find salvation, if he be not his own enemy, and wilfully cast away his own mercy. He 'gave himself a ransom for all,' 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6, ἀντίλυτρον, a ransom in our stead, or a counter-ransom, in opposition to the sin of Adam, the fountain of our bondage; for all upon gospel conditions. As he gave himself for all, so he was accepted for all upon the same conditions; for he was accepted as he gave himself. It is a comfort to a diseased hospital, that a physician is chosen and accepted by the governors that is able to cure every disease; it is no less a comfort to a guilty soul, that there is a sacrifice sufficient to expiate every sin. But there is a ground of sensible comfort to those that believe. If when Christ walked upon the waters, and was labouring in the floods of affliction in the days of his humiliation, he bid his disciples not to fear, how much more may we expel fear from our believing hearts, since he is sat down upon his throne, and the whole merit of his sacrifice graciously accepted! Let us represent to ourselves this crucified, but now crowned victim, lying in the bosom of his Father, represent to ourselves the Father full of delights, rejoicing in the views of this sacrificed body, drawing a perpetual stream of pleasure and sweet smells from the fumes of this sacrifice rising up continually before him; may not this calm our fears, since it smooths the frowns of divine justice? Did the people shout when the ark returned? and shall our hearts be full of fears when our sacrifice is returned to heaven, and hath found a gracious reception from that justice we had so highly provoked? A disconsolate carriage in an holy believer implies as if God had rejected it as mean and weak, rather than received it as perfect and glorious; a heavy walking is a disparagement to the greatness of the sacrifice, and the wisdom and judgment of God the acceptor of it. If we should 'eat our bread with a merry heart,' because 'God hath accepted our works,' Eccles. ix. 7, much more since God hath accepted our victim, by whose merits our duties and works smell sweet, that before smelt rank by nature. We should therefore draw as much sweetness from this sacrifice for our souls, according to our measures, as God did from it for his own content and satisfaction; it appeased God's fury against us, and should banish our jealousies of God.

(1.) If once acceptable to God, then it is for ever acceptable; if once

* Dailé, sur 1 Cor. v. 7, Sermon. x. pp. 394, 395.

sweet, it is always sweet. God cannot be deceived in his estimations, nor change his value of it, nor can the sacrifice ever become noisome. The strength of the divine nature, that rendered it at first grateful, preserves its savour for ever; he died to offer it, and lives to preserve the virtue of it, Rom. v. 10. The fragrancy conferred upon it by the deity in conjunction with the humanity, is as durable as the deity itself: Heb. x. 11, 'He sat down on the right hand of God,' after he had offered himself a sacrifice, to exercise the office of a priest. God would have the priest and sacrifice for ever in his sight. His priesthood is for ever, his sacrifice therefore is for ever sweet. Without a sacrifice he could not be a priest. As his priesthood hath a perpetual vigour, so his sacrifice hath a perpetual freshness and inexhaustible virtue; for the exercise of his office depends upon the continuance of the offering. The blood of this sacrifice is not compared to a pond, or water in a vessel, though of the largest capacity, but to a living and ever-running fountain: Zech. xiii. 1, 'A fountain set open for the house of David.' Repentance was hid from the eyes of Christ in offering it for a ransom from the power of the grave, and a redemption from death, Hosea xiii. 14, and no less is repentance hid from the eyes of God in accepting it. The covenant sealed by it is everlasting, and derives its duration from this blood of the victim, Heb. xiii. 20, the virtue of it endures as long as the covenant; since if that failed the covenant would expire, the superstructure not being able to stand if the foundation be rotten. And from hence an everlasting righteousness is derived, that our persons, odious by Adam, may be beautiful by Christ. At the same time that he made reconciliation for iniquity, he brought in everlasting righteousness, Dan. ix. 24; at the same time therefore that God accepted that reconciliation, he accepted that everlasting righteousness for security and justification. He hath not pacified God for a few days or years, but for ever, Heb. x. 14. If it were so sweet in the expectation as to be the ground of the justification of those that hoped for it, it is much more sweet since the oblation, and of a stronger efficacy. He is the captain of the salvation of all the sons that are brought to glory, and that believe. Himself was 'made perfect through sufferings,' Heb. ii. 10. The twenty-four elders confessed themselves 'redeemed by this blood,' Rev. v. 8, 9; the patriarchs that died before him, as well as the apostles who expired after him; he was a lamb, a sacrifice, 'slain from the foundation of the world,' Rev. xiii. 8. Not in regard of decree* (that were a jejune sense of the place, as it would be to say, a man were dead from the foundation of the world, because it was appointed for him once to die), but in regard of efficacy and a mystical sprinkling of his blood upon those that lived at the beginning, as well as those that shall live at the end of the world. If it had a savour with God for those that lived before him, it hath much more a savour for those that have lived since his actual offering and acceptance.

(2.) From this ariseth pardon of sin. He was a sweet savour as he offered himself, and in the ends for which he offered himself. He was a sacrifice for sin; for so those words *περὶ ἁμαρτίας*, Rom. viii. 3, which we translate *and for sin*, must be understood and read thus, 'And by a sacrifice for sin condemned sin in the flesh.' If offered for sin, and accepted as an offering for sin, the consequent of this must be remission. Through the blood of that beloved whom he accepted, 'we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins,' Eph. i. 6, 7; not of one, or two, or a few sins, but all; he was made sin indefinitely, all kind of sin in the extent, as much made sin as he was made accursed; as he bore all the curse, so he satisfied for all sin, the greatest as well as the least; so that the blood of this sacrifice

* Daillé, Serm. sur Ps. cx. 1, p. 409.

'cleanseth from all sin,' 1 John i. 7, where gospel dispositions are found; from all that from which the law of Moses could not justify; Acts xiii. 39, 'And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.' What was impossible to be done by the sacrifices of the law, is completely done by the offering of the Redeemer. The strength of this is directly opposite to the weakness of the other; that could not really justify from any, and this is able to justify from all. As it was not over-valued by God, so it cannot be overbalanced by sin; since the judgment of God hath passed upon it with an approbation, the monstrousness of guilt is not too great for an expiation. Whatsoever our sins are, yet they have their limits; but God's infinite pleasure in the sacrifice speaks the merit of it infinite, and the efficacy of it eternal. All sins were at once laid upon the head of this offering, Isa. liii. 7; he suffered but once, and therefore at one time all sins by one act were laid upon his shoulders, 1 Peter ii. 24, 'he bore them his own self,' and God accepted him his own self, and accepted him as he bore them, and glorified him, because he purged them, Heb. i. 3. So that though he did but once offer himself, and that for all sins in the bulk, he was received with a welcome, as if he had offered in particular for every sin; and therefore there is no more need of an offering, but a recourse to that one price. To think it is not able to expiate all sin, is to undervalue the judgment God hath given of his Son, to charge him with a mistake, and to imagine that there is more in sin to ruin than in this sacrifice to repair.

(3.) Hence then there can be no condemnation to them that are in Christ. The apostle lays down this conclusion, and confirms it by the reason of his being a sacrifice, Rom. viii. 1, 3. They who are presented by Christ, quickened by the virtue of this sacrifice, cannot fall under the stroke of divine justice. If it was offered for those that should believe, it was accepted for such as should believe, it being accepted for the same persons, and the same ends for which it was offered, and therefore those persons fundamentally accepted in the acceptation of it, and the ends for which it was offered, granted, and concluded on in the act of acceptation. The apostle upon this score breathes out a challenge to all to bring a condemning charge against him; the justice of God, the curse of the law, the charges of conscience, and the accusations of devils may be all answered by this: Rom. viii. 33, 34, 'It is Christ that died, it is God that justifies.' It is Christ that is offered, and God that accepts. Justice cannot condemn; for though his sacrifice was sweet and pleasant to all the perfections of the divine nature, yet justice was the peculiar object of it. God as a judge delivered him, God as a judge accepted him: justice required it, and justice is disarmed by it; justice only was to be contented; mercy required no blood; wisdom stepped in to decide the controversy, and make an agreement. If the condemning attribute be satisfied, there is no condemnation to be expected. If it be sweet to justice, justice cannot refrain its former frowns; justice cannot be pleased with that, and displeased with those for whom it was offered and accepted, and by whom it is received. It is part of our happiness that we come not only to God as gracious, but God as a judge, 'To God the judge of all,' Heb. xii. 23. As Christ was made sin for us, so are we made righteous by him. He was made sin to undergo a condemnation, that we might be made righteous and be above a condemnation. It is more efficacious to divert the sword of divine justice from the believing offender, than the blood of the paschal lamb was to turn the edge of the angel's sword from the house of an Israelite. The blood of Christ sprinkled cannot be of less force than the blood of a silly lamb, since the efficacy of it was not as it was the blood of a lamb, but the blood of a

type, deriving its virtue not from the subject whence the blood was drawn, but from the person signified, and the sacrifice prefigured by it. Well then, his condemnation hath procured our absolution, and God's acceptance of him hath insured our liberty; the sweet savour of the sacrifice hath overcome the stench of our sins. Though God forsook him for a time, he hath now accepted him, that he may not abandon us for ever; neither the wrath of God nor the malediction of the law is to be feared. God by this one act hath stopped the course of his vengeance, and laid aside the thunders of Sinai. The flames we have deserved are quenched by the blood flowing from the wounds of this victim; the smoke of our sacrifice shadows us, and in God's acceptance of him every believer finds his infallible absolution.

(4.) Here is a sufficient ground for peace of conscience. This only can give a repose to our spirits, turn our fears into hopes, and our sorrows into songs. If it were a sweet savour to God, whose infinite knowledge was acquainted with the least mite, as well as the greatest mountain, in the number of our sins, and whose holiness found an infinite loathsomeness in our iniquities; if it thus contented God, it may settle the agitation of our spirits; and because it stilled fury in God, it may silence troubles in us; if it gave God a delight, who in the knowledge of our sins, loathing of them, and condemning of them, is 'greater than our hearts,' 1 John iii. 20, it is a ground of peace to us, who come infinitely short of God in knowing our charge, infinitely short of his holiness in loathing our guilt, and infinitely short of his justice in condemning ourselves. That which hath been a sweet savour to pacify God, wants not a savour to appease our consciences. Our great inquiry is, in troubles of spirit, how shall we appear before God? The answer from this doctrine is, in the smoke of this sacrifice; the impurities of our natures, the sin of our souls, and the mixture in our services are purified by this. The sweetness of this sacrifice hath sweetened the terrors of the Lord, and rendered man a welcome supplicant to that God, before whom he durst not formerly appear.

(5.) Here is a full ground of expectation of all necessary blessings. God accepted it as it was offered; it was offered not only as a propitiating, but a purchasing sacrifice, and the acceptance of it was in the same quality wherein it was offered, Acts xx. 28. His blood was a purchasing blood; he purchased a people for heaven, and purchased heaven for his people; he did not only silence justice with its wrath, but merited heaven with its riches, and shed his blood as a price for the pleasures of paradise. God judged this sacrifice not only enough to free man from misery, but instate him in happiness; not only to deliver our souls from the pit, but to enlighten us with the light of the living. It was valued by him as a full compensation for the wrongs he had sustained, and a full merit for the blessings we wanted. When he found this ransom, his voice was not only 'Deliver him from going down into the pit,' but 'I will make his flesh fresher than a child's;' a strength and vigour of grace shall be restored in him, as the radical moisture in a child; 'He shall return to the days of his youth, he shall pray to God, and God will be favourable to him, and he shall see his face with joy,' Job xxxiii. 24-26. The Israelites addressed to the propitiatory, not only for the pardon of their sins, but the conferring of other blessings; this is the blood of the covenant, and therefore procures for us the blessings of the covenant. The blessings we want are often in the gospel ascribed to the merit of this sacrifice, and not simply to the grace of God. The grace of God appointed the sacrifice, but the blessings we receive were merited by it; our victim was so pleasing to God, and the obedience in it so full of an infinite love to him, that he gained by it the affections of God, and a grant of whatsoever

was most precious, to be bestowed upon those for whom he offered himself, that thereby the pleasure he took in it might be fully evidenced.

5. *Use.* Let us lay hold of it and plead this sacrifice.

(1.) Let natural men imitate God in an acceptance of this sacrifice. No man perisheth for want of God's pleasure in it, but for want of his own acceptance of it upon the gospel conditions. No bitten Israelite perished for want of a brazen serpent, but for want of a look to it. Cast not an aspersion upon God by undervaluing that which he doth so highly prize; be guided by his infallible judgment, rather than by the errors of your own; think not of it coldly, as if you were indifferent whether you had a share in it or no, since God received it not with an indifferent, but an unconceivable affection. Let that which is sweet to God be so to us; that which is savoury to that infinite Spirit, cannot justly be unsavoury to our contracted souls. God found no sweetness in the blood of goats, or smoke of incense, Ps. 1., but only in this sacrifice; nor should any of us rest on the transitory pleasures of this life, and sing a *requiem* to our souls from perishing enjoyments, but from the blood of the Lamb that endures for ever. There is no likelihood for a creature to find rest in that wherein God finds none; we are not sure of our lives, but we are sure we are guilty; and shall any of us be unconcerned about a powerful sacrifice? Let a self-aborrancy possess our souls, without which we can have no esteem of this offering. As God's loathing of sin made him value this for expiation, so our sense of sin will make us value this for our atonement. Let no man think that unworthy of him which God thinks not unworthy of himself; he commanded the angels to adore him for it, either when he brought him into the world to be a sacrifice, or brought him into the world above, after he had 'by his blood purged our sins,' Heb. i. 6. God would have men and angels concur with him in the magnificent acceptance of our Saviour.

(2.) Let those that believe, continually apply and plead it. This is so sweet to God, that there is no need of a new sacrifice, but there is need of a daily application; there was no need of a new serpent to be erected upon every sting, but there was need of a new looking up to the serpent upon every wound. We can be no more without this one day to comfort our souls, than we can be without bread to nourish our bodies; the remembrance of it must come up with the remembrance of every sin in our consciences. In this only shall we find mercy for our iniquities, and comfort for our sorrows. What was sweet to God in the acceptance, will be sweet to him in the pleas of it; it hath not lost its savour, nor hath God changed his judgment. Christ is in the fragrant of his sacrifice with God, as well as in his divinity, 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' We contract a daily guilt, and we stand in need of a daily application to this. God will not make us perfect in this life, to keep up the continual credit of this sacrifice, that we may live by faith, and have every day sensible thoughts of the power of this oblation. Let all our pleas with God be founded in his acceptance of this; it is always to be pleaded by us, as it is always eyed by the Father. No pardon is granted but upon the account of it: in every pardoning act, God looks first with pleasure upon this victim, and dips his pen in the blood of it to blot out the iniquity. No blessing is poured upon us, on which the merit of this sacrifice is not stamped; and no petition must be presented by us, but in the virtue of it.

A DISCOURSE OF OBEDIENCE.

Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.—JOHN XV. 14.

THE words are a part of Christ's discourse after the supper he had instituted. The chapter begins with a parable, wherein Christ likens himself to a vine, and the disciples (and consequently all believers) to branches. The using this parable was occasioned, as some think, by Christ's passing by some vineyards, whence he raises a discourse to spiritualise their meditations upon the view of the creatures. Whether this were so or no, yet the discourse is excellent, both to shew the near union and relation of Christ and believers, and the way and means of a spiritual growth in sanctification and holiness. Christ was sent into the world to publish a new religion, but not a lazy, but a fruitful one. God the Father is the husbandman, who both dresseth the vine, and purgeth the branches to render them fruitful. Several arguments he useth to engage them to abide in him, and consequently to be fruitful.

(1.) From their misery without it, ver. 6. The fire is the portion of unfruitful branches. 'If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire.'

(2.) From the prevalency of their prayers with God, if his words did practically and fruitfully abide in them. Ver. 7, 'If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.'

(3.) From the glory of God and honour of Christ which are furthered by it, ver. 8. When what you ask is in order to your own fruitfulness and consequently God's glory, you need not fear the grant of your requests. 'Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be my disciples.'

(4.) From gratitude; since he had given them, and was yet further to give them, the highest demonstration of his affection to them, ver. 9. You have had evidence of my Father's love to me, in his witnessing my mission from heaven by multitudes of miracles, and such a kind of love as my Father bears to me, I do, and will bear to you if you continue to be my disciples. And all the proof of it I demand of you is, the continuance of my commands and the performance of them: ver. 10, 'If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love, as I have kept my Father's will, and abide in his love.' If you would have such a kind of love from me as I have had from my Father, you must perform such a kind of obedience to me as I have performed to my Father; you must make me a pattern of imitation, and my

precept the rule of your actions. And 'do not think,' saith he, ver. 11, that what I have spoken of to you is so much out of an authority or an imperiousness, as out of an affection to you and your interest. It is not that I should have an advantage, but that you should have a joy; that such a joy as you have felt in my presence with you, and in my redeeming work, may constantly remain in you. Now the way to have this joy is to keep my commandments. Fruitfulness will clear up your interest in me, and especially the observance of that command of a mutual love to one another, ver. 13, for 'greater love can no man shew than to lay down his life for his friend;' and you shall see I will not go backward to discover the highest affection to you; and as I discover my affection to you in laying down my life, so you can discover your affection to me only by observing my commands.

So that the verse lies between two arguments to urge them to it.

(1.) His own love to them, which was of the highest stamp, ver. 13.

(2.) The revelation he had made to them, which was the fullest, ver. 15. 'All things that he had heard of his Father,' and the clearest, those that he had made known to them; so that you have my love to oblige you, and my revelation to direct you. As I have had love to purchase what you want, so you must have love to perform what I order: 'Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.' He invites them to it by an honourable title of friends. You shall be ranked in the number of them, and continue in this dignity, if you keep my commands. I do not press this of loving one another, that you should perform this only and neglect the rest, for you are not my friends in the practice of one of my precepts unless you join the practice of other precepts to it.

Ye are my friends. Actively, you will declare and manifest yourselves to be my friends in conforming yourselves to my mind. Passively, I will declare myself to you. I have treated you as friends* in imparting the counsels of God to you, not known to others. It is fit you should treat me as your friend in gratifying me in obedience to my commands. The dignity of a friend to Christ may well soften the hardness of a command. He doth not so call them friends as that they should forget that they are his servants and he their Lord; for as he mentions friendship as their privilege, so he mentions his will by the way of a command to make them sensible of their duty: 'If you do whatsoever I command you.' It is a great honour (saith Austin) to call those his friends whom he knows to be his servants.

Ye.

1. All of ye. It is universal. Men are too narrow to have many intimates, but the heart of Christ is large enough for all. Friendship with Christ is the privilege of every obedient person.

2. Ye, though poor, considered as men. Outward distress is no hindrance to spiritual relation.

3. Ye disciples, apostles employed for God, yet not my friends unless you obey me. Not gifts, but grace; not the highest employment, but exact practice interests men in this privilege.

Are, not shall be. *You are* doth not exclude the future, but assures them of it. They shall be because they are. It is not a thing to be waited for, but at present possessed.

If you do whatsoever I command you. Adam had a precept,† which, if he had kept, he had continued in the love of God; and Christ hath given us precepts which, if we keep, we shall continue in the love of Christ. Obedience is necessary, not by way of merit, but condition. He shews how grateful

* Muscul.

† Ibid.

obedience is to him, because he dignifies the practiser of it with such a title, which how honourable is it for us, and how necessary for our welfare.

The text is made up of privilege and duty, relation and action.

1. Privilege and relation : *friends*.

2. Duty and action : *if ye do*.

Observe, 1, how glorious is the relation of a holy soul to Christ! He doth not say, I love you if you keep my commandments. A man may love his servant or his beast, but admits them not to special friendship; the condition of the one and the incapacity of the other will not suffer it. This title is higher than an assurance of a bare love; he loves them as friends as well as servants.

2. How condescending is the love of Christ! He calls the worms of the earth the friends of God. We cannot be his servants unless we keep his commands; and by keeping his commands we commence a higher degree than that of servants, even that of friends.

3. Christ's commands, not his deeds, are the object of our obedience. Set not before you what I do, but what I order you to do. Our conformity to Christ consists not so much in an imitation of what he did as in an obedience to what he prescribes; the example of Christ is not our rule without the precept of Christ. Some actions of Christ are unimitable, but all his commands are obeyable.

4. Privilege is entailed only to duty.

That which I intend is only the nature of obedience, as deducible from these words, 'If ye do whatsoever I command you.'

1. *Do*.

(1.) Obedience must be positive. Not only avoid what I prohibit. It consists not merely in not bringing forth bad fruit, but in bringing forth good. It is not enough to forbear the commissions of sin, if we are guilty of the omissions of duty. The fig-tree was not cursed because it brought forth bad fruit, but because it brought forth no fruit, Mat. xxi. 19. No father will be content with his child in forbearing what he forbids, unless he also performs what he prescribes. Many, like the pharisees, please themselves with negatives, I am not profane, a drunkard, swearer; but what title is procured to the privilege in the text, if as much cannot be spoken of positives as may be of negatives? We must be as careful to do what he wills, as to shun what he hates. He never 'puts off the old man' cordially, that hath not also put on the new, Col. iii. 8, 10. It is not a true friendship to omit what may displease a friend, if we do not also what may gratify him. God would have an obedience from us suitable to the happiness he promiseth us. He doth not only free us from hell and wrath, but invest us with heaven and happiness, so he would have us not only delivered from sin but created to good works. And you know that our Saviour is not only called Jesus because he 'saves from sin,' Mat. i. 21, but Christ, because he is appointed by God to govern, fit, and prepare souls for heaven.

(2.) Do it as friends. Obedience must be sincere. An action may look like a friendly act when there is nothing of friendship and good will in the heart. Every precept requires not only an outward but an inward conformity, not only a bodily action but a spiritual frame. God would not have the skin of a sacrifice without the flesh and entrails, nor the carcase of obedience without truth in the inward parts, Ps. li. 6. Christ intends not only an outward appearance, but respects the form of every action. Duties are not differenced by the outward garb, but inward frame. Waters may have the same colour, yet one may be sweet and the other brackish. Two apples may have the same colour, yet one may be a crab, and the other of

a delightful relish. A serpent hath a speckled skin, but an inward poison. We must look to the rule, that the matter of our actions be suited to it, otherwise we may commit gross wickedness, as they did who thought they did God good service by killing his righteous servants, John xvi. 2. We must also look to the frame of our hearts, otherwise we may be guilty of gross hypocrisy. A friendly action cannot come from the heart of an enemy, no more than good fruit from a corrupt tree. It may have a specious appearance when the heart is rank, as a man with a stinking breath holding a perfume in his mouth smells sweet; the sweetness is not from his breath, but the perfume, which takes not away the foulness of his stomach, or the corruption of his lungs. Christ cannot count any service from a rotten heart of any worth. A multitude of them are but as cyphers, signify nothing without a figure in the front: Prov. x. 20, 'The heart of a wicked man is little worth.' Sound actions cannot spring from a corrupt heart, no more than sweet water from a bitter fountain. He that considers not how his heart stands, whether it were wound up, whether it were in tune, whether it were melted, or whether it were frozen, that doth not care how drowsy and unsavoury his spirit was, doth not anything as a friend to Christ.

(3.) Do as friends; obedience must be affectionate. It must be love 'out of a pure mind,' 1 Tim. i. 5. In the command of charity, which is the special command before the text, the greatest outward assistances are of no value without this ingredient, but the least with it are highly accepted. A cup of cold water, Mat. x. 42, a little box of ointment with an affectionate respect to God, are valued and registered. As mercies are not welcome to a good man without God's love in them, so our services are not welcome to God without our love in them. A little bread and drink with God's love is better than great riches with his displeasure. Job's boils and rags with God's love were richer than his enemies' robes, and a starving Lazarus better than a rich epicure. A drop of service with affection to God is more worth than all the works of men without it. It is no argument of friendship for a man to send a rich cabinet to another with something in it, to which he knows his friend hath an antipathy. Splendid services to Christ without glowing affections are of the same nature. Christ would have us imitate him; he gives himself with his special mercies, and we must give ourselves with our special duties. But how often are some duties performed, not out of love to Christ, but love to ourselves? Judas his carrying the bag might be one cause of Judas his obedience to Christ, that he might get some advantage by it; and when he saw a greater offered by the pharisees, he deserted and betrayed him. *Fac me Episcopum Romanum, saith one, et ero Christianus.* When men pretend service to God to catch preferments from men, when they make a profession of religion to cheat more craftily, *Ut sub Christiano nomine lucrosius pereant,* this is not to do what Christ commands, but what we affect.

(4.) Do. Not be constrained to do, but do willingly, freely. What Paul would not have servants give to their masters, Eph. vi. 6, that many men give to God, an eye-service. While men have some serious thoughts of God's omniscience, they may pay him some service, as a servant may work while his master's eye is upon him or his feet at the door, but make a mock at him when his back is turned. Or they may do it out of fear of judgment. This may be a motive to quicken, but not the spring to give the first life to our obedience. A man may be very free in obedience, but upon a wrong motive, as schoolboys may get their lessons well one day, not out of love to their books, but that they may play the next; or as a child at play, called by his father to go upon an errand, runs faster than his father would have him,

puts himself all in a sweat. This might be thought a very free and willing obedience, but it is not so much obedience to his father as a gratifying himself in a speedy return to his game, and pursuance of it without any more disturbance. Or there may be a readiness when an obedience will suit to corruption. This is such an obedience as the devil is for. He was much for Job's trial, which God was also for. God orders him to deprive Job of his estate, that thereby his sincerity might be evidenced to the world, and the devil conforms himself to God's order out of malice to ruin him, hoping that hypocrisy would issue out instead of sincerity.

[1.] There is a freedom as opposed to constraint. It is not the act itself, but the naturalness of it, is a sign of obedience. A constrained obedience may consist with a devillish nature, and therefore cannot be a sign of a friendship to Christ. The devil obeys God, but by force; he is forced to a negative obedience, and sometimes to a positive obedience, not by any conscience of a command, but by a constraint by God's power; as Luke viii. 28, when Christ commanded him to come out of his long-possessed habitation. There may be a constraint by education, which is scarce sensible, when that upon a profane man is more visible. As a rugged stone will move no further than a strong arm will throw it, so a profane man moves no farther than his conscience, or some fear of man, throws him in any duty of obedience. But a man that hath the advantage of a religious education is like a stone smoothed into a right figure, that moves upon a plain at the least touch, yet there is constraint goes to that motion, though not so sensible, because the parts are by an outward smoothness fitted for such a motion; so it is with a man that is smoothed by education.

But the obedience Christ requires is to be free. Good actions are therefore called fruits of righteousness, fruits of holiness; because as a tree brings forth fruits naturally, so doth a true Christian bring forth righteousness. The gardener helps, indeed, by watering and digging, but doth not constrain the tree. God helps the man at the first conversion, but doth not force the soul. In Gal. v. 19, 22, it is observed that sins are called works, and graces called fruits, to shew the freedom of a holy, and the servile frame of a wicked, man. A good man is not put upon a duty merely by a sudden fit and importunity of conscience; as wicked men naturally lay in provision for their lusts, so do good men labour to lay in provision for their obedience and graces. The law, like a schoolmaster, scourgeth some truant souls to obedience, but the gospel gives a willingness of spirit in the day of power, Ps. cx. 8. The difference between these two powers is, the law is a powerful constrainer, mixed with severe threatenings that drive to fear, and the gospel is a powerful constraint, mixed with kind promises which help to love.

[2.] Freedom, as opposed to dulness and heaviness. God's delight in a holy person is rendered as one reason of his mercy: Ps. xviii. 19, 'He delivered me, because he delighted in me;' and our delight in Christ should be the reason of our duty. 'If ye do whatsoever I command you.' It is not a lumpish and heavy action that Christ requires; he requires such an obedience of us as himself performed to his Father: John xv. 10, 'If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love, as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.' That was not a heavy motion; it was his 'meat and drink to do his Father's will,' John iv. 34. Meat and drink are not only naturally desired, but delightfully received. Cheerfulness accompanies election of a thing: Ps. cxix. 173, 174, 'I have chosen thy precepts, and thy law is my delight.' Lumpishness is a sign we never chose it, but were forced to it. Sin is sweet to a wicked man, as a dainty to a glutton's palate, Job x. 12. He accounts duty his burden, and

a true disciple accounts it his honour. He, like the sun, rejoiceth to run, and when he is in service, his heart cries out, with Peter in the mount, 'It is good to be here.' Such cheerfulness in service procures cheerfulness in mercies: Isa. lxiv. 5, 'Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and works righteousness.' He puts to his hand to help such an one. Christ loves not melancholy and phlegmatic service; such a temper in acts of obedience is a disgrace to God and to religion: to God, it betrays us to have jealous thoughts of God, as though he were a hard master; to religion, it makes others think duties are drudgeries, and not privileges. Well, then, so much of cheerfulness in obedience, so much of a Christian temper; so much of dulness, so much of an antichristian frame.

The disciples of Christ have not this liveliness in a constant equality. The wings of the soul drenched in sin, as well as the wings of a bird bemired, will flag. A good man's heaviness is from infirmities and distempers. A strong, active man may be laid upon his sickbed, and be loath to be stirred, but a carnal man's heaviness is from nature and willingness. A wicked man's heaviness is at his duty, a good man's heaviness is at his own deficiency; his delight consists in the spirit, for the flesh is weak, and will never in this world be otherwise.

(5.) Do *whatsoever*, &c. Not lazily; obedience must be diligent. God cares not for a slow obedience; he would not therefore have an ass offered in sacrifice, Exod. xiii. 13, but would have it redeemed with a lamb, or the neck of it broke. A true Christian is like a seraphim, that hath six wings to fly upon God's errands, Isa. vi. 2; or like the living creatures, Ezek. i. 14, that ran and returned at the appearance of a flash of lightning, which is the quickest motion. Sound members move at the command of the will, whereas palsy members must be dragged along. Man naturally would have a ready God, and not a ready heart; he would have a God ready to attend his complaints, but would not have a heart ready to attend God's commands. But good men take God at a word of precept, when he hath any work for them to do, as well as at a word of promise, when they have any wants for him to supply. Hypocrites may be obedient in promises, as the son in the Gospel, Mat. xxi. 29, 30, that promised to go into the vineyard. A good man doth more without open resolving, another resolves more without open doing. A master will take it ill if a servant disputes his commands. Paul set about the work he was ordered quickly: Gal. i. 16, 'I consulted not with flesh and blood;' he called not flesh and blood into a cabinet council. What we do for Christ, we must do without advising with corruption, which is an enemy to God and his ways. Such counsellors will furnish us with evasions to slip from our duty, and represent things either impossible or unreasonable; either that it cannot be done at all, or else it may be done better at another time; and as it is said of our own nation, we lose more by treaties than we gain by war, so it may be said of our corruption, we lose more by such treaties than we gain by an open war against it. God would employ Moses though he had a slow speech, but checks him for his slow obedience. Abraham was as quick in his observance of God's command as Moses was slow: Gen. xvii. 23, 'The self-same day' wherein he had received the command of circumcision he put it in practice; he would make no pauses, lest carnal reason should step in with objections. The readiness of the Gentiles to obey Christ is expressed: Ps. xviii. 44, 'As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me;' like Elisha, who, upon Elijah's spreading his mantle over him, leaves his father, and oxen, and plough, and runs after him. The more of fire there is in anything, the more active it is; the more of a divine Spirit, the more vigorous.

(6.) Do *whatsoever*, &c., constantly ; not do it for a spurt, or by fits and starts. Obedience must be constant ; it is that which God longs for : Deut. v. 29, ' Oh that there were such a heart in them, that they would keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them ! ' and it will never be well with a man till he doth it.

[1.] In sinning times it should be most conspicuous. Good men should ' shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation,' Philip. ii. 15. The stars shine clearest in the darkest, if unclouded, nights. Good men are like fountains, hottest in the coldest seasons. When did David love and esteem God's precepts, but when men had made void his law ? Ps. cxix. 126-128. He would double his valuation of, and obedience to, God's commands, when he saw them most violated by others. He brings in a double *Therefore*, ' Therefore I love thy commandments above gold ; therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right.' The more men despised them, the more he valued them, because he knew they were most dear to God, since they were most hateful to man. David had been refreshed by God when he was afflicted, and he would most please God when he was dishonoured. Wisdom, *i. e.* Christ, justifies her children in the sight of her adversaries ; they should therefore justify wisdom in the sight of her enemies. Christ would have his people bear witness, by their profession and practice, against the sins of the times, as well as he will judge and condemn the world at last with them by their approbation. Thus Joseph of Arimathea would go boldly to Pilate to beg the body of Jesus, though the malice of the age had risen so high as to put him to death, when he was never mentioned in Scripture till that action. Sinful times increase the wickedness of the wicked, but strengthen the graces of the godly, for they make them more watchful, and watchfulness makes them the more practical. We then declare ourselves most the friends of Christ, when we own him among a multitude of enemies. Opposition makes God take notice of our obedience in a special manner. Probably Judas his repining at Mary's kindness in anointing Christ, was the occasion that the scent of that ointment was spread about the world.

[2.] In suffering times. In suffering times from God, as in desertion. Christ's obedience was eminent, he would obey God when God had forsaken him. A true disciple is not, like Saul, impatient to wait upon God when he hides his face, and run to a witch for counsel : ' Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,' Job. xiii. 15. To obey Christ when he manifests his love, is obedience to ourselves ; to obey him when he veils himself, is pure love and obedience to him.

In suffering times from men. Many would be obedient to their advantage ; but to be obedient to death, is the property of a true disciple, Rev. iii. 21, as it was of his Master, Philip. ii. 8. Misery makes men oftener forget their virtues than their vices. Many are like the Jews, to cry *Hosanna* when Christ rides in triumph ; and presently after, when he is condemned, either fly from him or vote against him ; like snakes that come out of their holes in a hot day to sun themselves, and at night retreat to skulk in their caverns. Many come to live by Christ, but not die for him. Shame, mocks, scoffing, did not hinder Christ from dying for us ; why should shame and reproaches hinder us from dying for Christ. The apostle speaks of cleaving to that which is good, Rom. xii. 9, *κολληόμενοι* ; things glued are not easily separated. We should cleave so close to him that nothing should part us from him. Wind will not blow a snail, or any other glutinous substance, off a tree.

Well, then, constancy is an ingredient in the obedience Christ requires. His trees bring forth fruit in old age, Ps. xcii. 14. Age makes other things decay, but makes a Christian flourish. Some are like hot horses, mettlesome at the beginning of a journey, and tired a long time before they come to their journey's end. A good disciple, as he would not have from God a temporary happiness, so he would not give to God a temporary obedience; as he would have his glory last as long as God lives, so he would have his obedience last as long as he lives. Judas had a fair beginning, but destroyed all in the end by betraying his Master.

2. The subject of this doing. *Ye*, it must be the whole man. Not *do* with a part of yourselves, but your whole selves; there must be a resignation of the whole soul to God. The tables of the law were written on both sides, Exod. xxxii. 15, 16, so must obedience be upon every faculty. Ahab, Herod, and the stony ground were partial in their obedience, like 'Ephraim, a cake not turned,' Hosea vii. 8, baked on one side and dough on the other; *Intus Nero, foras Cato*, saith Jerome. But our obedience to Christ must answer our former enmity; as that was spread over the whole soul, so must this. There must be an enlightened understanding, flexible will, tender conscience, regulated affections, watchful members to go upon the errands of God. As the father said to the prodigal, 'All that I have is thine,' so must the soul to Christ, Lord, all that I have is thine, understanding, will, affections, &c. The holocausts among the Israelites were wholly burnt; so are we wholly to sacrifice ourselves.

3. The object. *Whatsoever*, "Osa, as many things as I command you. Not think it enough to perform one or two, but every one whatsoever. And so he taught the apostles to teach others, Mat. xxviii. 20. Christ performed every command of his Father, and we must perform every command of Christ. He is not a man after God's own heart that doth not 'fulfil all his will,' it is David's commendation that he did so, Acts xiii. 22. Josiah hath the same character left upon record, both for the universality of the subject, and the universality of the object: 2 Kings xxiii. 35, 'He turned to the Lord with all his soul, according to all the law of Moses.' An habitual disposition there must be, that must pass into act, where a particular command, and an opportunity of observing it, meet together. No command but is so good, so just, so holy, that it deserves our compliance with it in the highest pitch, and when we cannot equal it we are to bewail our defects. Obedience is quite out of tune if any one command be slighted. The lute is incapable of making music if one string, the treble, be broken. When the people went to gather manna on the Sabbath, and so broke the law, God taxes them with a violation of the whole, Exod. xvi. 27, 28. To neglect any one command is disingenuous. Would we have all our sins pardoned, and shall we not be willing to have all God's commands performed? It is also dangerous. If a man be to go ten miles, and only go nine of them, he had as good never have set out, he will never come to his journey's end.

(1.) Whatsoever I command you, in the true meaning and design of it. Not like the pharisees, who, though they do not blot out the law, yet enervate it by false glosses and interpretations, and so make it insignificant, taking away the life and soul of a command.

(2.) Whatsoever I command you, though it may seem mean and low in the eyes of men. As Christ did not think anything too low to do for us, we must not think anything too mean to do for him. Whatsoever is accounted vile that is for the honour of Christ, we should endeavour to be more vile in it. We have David's vote for it, that it was 'better to be a doorkeeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.' The least duty

must be performed ; art shews itself most in little works, so doth grace its excellency in the performance of the least commands. *Natura triumphat in minimis*, a fly shews God's power as well as the world. The least mite in sincerity is acceptable to God, as well as the greatest hecatomb, or a sacrifice of the beasts upon a thousand hills. The least command should be as dear to a gracious soul as the greatest. We are not to waive the greatest because of its difficulty, nor despise the least because of its littleness. A jewel is not accounted vile because it is little, nor should a command because it is mean. He that breaks the least command, shall be least in the kingdom of heaven.

4. The person commanding: 'Whatsoever I command you.*' The authority of Christ must be eyed in all obedience, and his command be made the rule. When we do the matter of the law, without an eye to the authority that enacts, it is an obedience to the law, but not to the lawgiver. Men may perform the matter of a law, yet despise the authority of the lawgiver in their hearts. We are not so much to consider, saith Jerome, *imperii quantitatem*, as *imperantis dignitatem*. We are not only to observe Christ as a friend, but obey him as a sovereign. He that is the king's friend must not forget that he is also the king's subject. What he doth as a friend in a way of kindness, he must perform also as a subject in a way of duty. We must glorify Christ as Christ, *i. e.* in all the relations wherein he stands to us. Now he is not only our Saviour, but our king, and we are not only his friends, but his servants. What we receive from God should be received as from him : 1 Thess. ii. 13, 'Ye received the word as the word of God.' What we do to God, should be done as to him, suitable to his divine greatness and majesty. Obedience must be performed because Christ commands, and as Christ commands it.

Use 1. It informs us of the excellency of the Christian religion. It demands the greatest purity, and confers the greatest privilege. It brings us to the rule of God, and invests us with the friendship of our Creator. No religion hath so much of benefit, and so much of duty. Nothing enforceth such exactness in the ways of God. Nothing bestows so much of happiness upon the creature. In other religions something is indulged to gain proselytes, and carnal rewards are proposed to invite them. The precepts of this are holy and the rewards high ; other religions consist in negatives, this in positives. The gospel discovers more sin, and exacts more holiness. It affords us matter of love, not fear, for our principle ; not force to constrain, but grace to persuade. Gospel obedience is not the fruit of bondage, but the fruit of love and friendship.

2. Obedience is our privilege as well as our duty. It admits us into the friendship of Christ. The bitterest duty is sugared with this unspeakable comfort. Those that stand idle in the market-place meet with no such reward. It is no small honour to be a king's friend ; how unconceivable is the honour to be a friend of Christ ! 'In keeping his commands there is great reward.†' This is a reward above the highest descent. Enoch was descended but the seventh from Adam, yet this was not his honour, but his walking with God. To be a friend of Christ in rags, is a greater honour than to be king of the whole world in purple robes. Jerome, speaking of a Roman senator, saith, He was noble, not because *Consularis*, but *Christianus*. The very act of an holy obedience gives a sweeter reflection than all the pleasures of the world. Christ, indeed, calls the gospel a yoke, but an easy one. He calls it a yoke, as natural men think it, not as gracious men

* 'Εγώ emphatically added.

† Imperium Dei beneficium est.—*Hierom.*

find it, for it is a privilege more than a yoke. Christ discovers the glory of his love in the heart, as God did the glory of his presence in the temple.

3. How inexcusable are disobedient professors. The greater the honour proposed as an invitation, the greater the sin in refusing the terms upon which that honour may be enjoyed. It had been worth the enduring the torments of some thousands of years, to come at last to the privilege of being the friends of Christ. But no such thing is required; it is not parting with the first-born of our bodies, or searching out thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil; it is not suffering the flames of hell for a finite multitude of years; no impossible or rigid penances are enjoined; only 'Do whatsoever I command you,' and his 'commands are not grievous' in the experience of those that have tried them, 1 John v. 3. What an unreasonable thing is it not to part with dung for gold, with rags for robes, with misery for happiness, with hell for heaven, with sin for Christ! He that would refuse to be a prince's favourite upon the performance of an easy task, deserves, without pity, to be spurned out of the court; and what excuse can that person have that will not exchange the slavery of the devil for the friendship of the Redeemer? Can any blame Christ at last for refusing any relation to them, and bidding them depart from him, when they here refused his friendship, and would have nothing to do with him?

4. How much comfort and encouragement may be drawn from hence under all reproaches. Who would regard the barking of dogs in the doing of that which hath an excellent honour entailed upon it? The devil regards not the opinions men have of him; he looks not upon their curses as his loss, because he is of an higher nature; he pursues his business. Shall a diabolical nature slight that which a divine nature shall not surmount? Shall not curses here, and torments at the end, discourage him from venting his malice against God, and prosecuting his devilish designs? and shall reproaches discourage any from that obedience which is attended with so great an honour? What is it to be reproached and scorned here a little time, while the favour of God is enjoyed, and after a few nights' sleep we are to be raised out of the dust to glory, to enjoy his friendship for ever, and to be in glory where he is? This would be a support when the bullets fly fast about our ears. It is impossible to be faint-hearted with lively thoughts of so great an honour. Weigh seriously this honour, and then weigh the obstructions, and see whether the latter be not overbalanced by the former. Would a glorified saint, incarnate again in the world, decline the practice of obedience upon such a gallant encouragement, because of reproaches? Men might as soon persuade him to fry in hell as to part with so great an honour upon so light an opposition. The rolling of a black cloud over a traveller's head will not cause him to break off a necessary journey to court, to become the king's friend or his son-in-law.

5. What an incentive have we, then, to an exact obedience! This is the delight of Christ, and so high a delight to him that he thinks fit to reward it with no less than a special friendship. Christ looked upon the young man's morality with an eye of love, much more will he upon an evangelical obedience. It is not the pomp of the world, or the glittering vanities man's heart runs after, that can lay any claim to this dignity. Obedience, though low, if sincere, is the delight of Christ. He loves to go into his vineyard and look upon the 'tender grapes,' as well as upon the 'ripe fruit,' Cant. vii. 12; viii. 2. It is by this you shew yourselves the friends of Christ; by this you maintain his honour in the world. This is a silent conviction upon others, and makes them have some veneration for religion. Men judge

usually of principles by practices, and you never heard any speak against the principles of religion, but they first fell upon the practice of the professors of it. It is by this obedience we glorify God and Christ, Mat. v. 16, *i. e.* make others speak well of the ways of religion. Let this honour of being the friends of Christ engage us to obedience as the means. It is a shame for such that may attain such a privilege to pursue anything lower; an Alexander watches for kingdoms. It is a poor-spirited Domitian that loves to catch flies. How many will conform to men's principles, to their will, for a small reward, yea, for no reward; and shall not we conform to our Redeemer's will for so glorious a title? We must first be Jacobs, supplanters of vice, before we be Israels, seers of God.

Let us close all with a few directions.

(1.) Let us walk as those that have the eye of Christ upon us, to see whether we act as friends to him or no. Let us consider in every action that it is registered by conscience, laid up in Christ's remembrance, and will be censured by him either as the act of a friend or an enemy. Men look upon the bark of the action; this may appear fair, and have a gloss upon it: Christ looks upon the inward part, upon the spirit, to see how the heart is conformed to the command. We may hide our deformities from men, but not from an all-seeing eye. Now I am going to this or that action, I have a watchful eye over me that pierceth into all my thoughts, discovers the principles whereby I am conducted, the end for which I move, and sees how my heart answers the command.

(2.) Let us walk as though every action were an inlet to the favour or enmity of Christ. What know I but this action may open a door to the favour of Christ, or his endless refusal? What do I know but at the end of this I may either be in Abraham's bosom or in a gulf of misery, and launched into a blessed or miserable eternity?

(3.) Let us walk as though the glory of Christ depended upon every action. If our credit, estates, relations, worldly advantages, depended upon one action, how careful and diligent should we be in the doing of it! Let us act as though the honour of Christ, and our relation to him, depended upon what we go about.

(4.) Let us walk as if we were to give an account immediately of what we have done. Let us set before us Christ's tribunal, and imagine ourselves called to judgment. I am going about a business, but if Christ should send for me at the end of it, what account can I give him of my friendship and obedience to him in it? Is this such an action that, when I look Christ in the face, I can challenge him upon this promise to own me as a friend?

(5.) Let us walk as though Christ stood before us crucified, with all the obligations of love on his part; as if we saw him with his wounds open, and love and blood distilling from his heart upon us; and consider whether the act we are going about be suited to such inestimable kindness, or a putting him to an open shame. Hath not Christ had wounds enough, but must I increase them? Hath not he had misery enough, but must I add more? Shall I break his heart who breathes kindness towards me, and behave myself as an enemy towards him who offers me a favour which cannot be merited by a creature? Shall I wound him whose heart is open for me, and strike him that woos me? Shall I be a Judas to him that would be my friend, and pull him down that would lift me up to the highest privilege of a creature?

(6.) Let us walk as we think a damned soul would walk, if he were again to live under the knowledge of such a promise. How would he obey, and obey heartily! How would he pray, and pray fervently! How busy might we

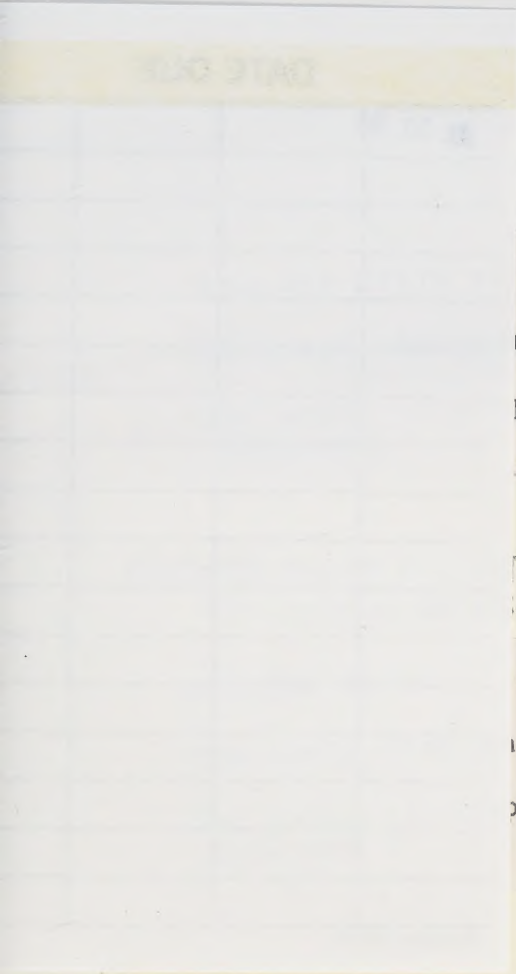
suppose him to be in inquiring what those commands were, and how diligent in the performance of them ! How would he by violence take all opportunities to pursue his duty, and attain his privilege ! What if any should see a damned soul stand before him when he was going into an unclean bed, and tell him it was for less than this he was judged an enemy to Christ, and a miserable wretch for ever ; would any man's fear suffer him to go on in his intended evil ? We have not those objects of fear before our eyes, but we have this promise in the word, suited more to ingenuous natures, to be accounted the friends of God and Christ, 'if we do whatsoever he commands us.'

END OF VOL. IV.

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